

2013 Hobart Conference Committee Report

Initial arrangements

Planning started in 2010 with selection of the venue. We went back to Wrest Point Hotel Casino because of the size of conference room needed to accommodate the open rectangle layout and space for observers, and also because of the range of accommodation/prices available on site. Rooms ranged from 4 ½ star (\$179), 4 star (\$157) and 3 ½ star (\$135) and a reduced price was available for breakfast if booked with accommodation. Prices were firm for 2013.

When we initially signed the contract (with a deposit of \$5000), we booked for a 3 day conference (Thurs, Fri, Sat) with accommodation held for the Wed prior and Sun after. When the duration of the conference was shortened in 2011 to take effect from 2013, we had to go back to Wrest point and ask for an alteration. This was done without penalty, however in the process of re-issuing the contract, the block booking for the Sunday night was inadvertently also dropped. This unfortunately didn't come to light until delegates who started booking accommodation in June 2013 were told there was no availability for the Sunday night because the Hotel was fully booked (2 other conferences scheduled at the same time). After a lot of complaints to the Conference Manager, additional rooms were made available for the Sunday night although possibly not enough for all those who wanted them. There were 67 rooms booked for a total of 234 room nights. Approximately 50% of attendees stayed for the Sunday night.

We also had some issues with the availability of walk-in-showers and disabled rooms – these also should be reserved in the initial block booking due to the numbers of our attendees who have mobility issues.

Conference venue

The conference venue worked well, however there were a couple of issues. There were 2 large drop-down screens but these didn't fit with our arrangement of the room, so unfortunately these were positioned behind delegates on one side of the rectangle. The air conditioning had just been renewed so there were a few teething problems getting a comfortable temperature.

The company display tables (9 in all) were around the perimeter of the adjacent room which provided access to the main conference room. All

morning/afternoon teas and hot buffet lunches were also served in this room and that worked very well for company staff/conference attendee interaction. Company personnel also attended most of the business sessions and took part in workshops so they felt they were actually part of the conference rather than outsiders looking in. An invitation was also issued to local Tasmanian ostromates to view the company displays without officially attending the conference and a small number took advantage of this.

Welcome function

The welcome function was 2 hours of drinks and canapés immediately following registration. Substantial food was provided, however because the WP staff aimed to spread the food evenly over the time period, probably ½ the attendees had left to go in search of dinner before the hot food came out. So attendees need to be advised what to expect. It was mainly a stand-up function with chairs around the perimeter of the room, but additional chairs and tables would've been advantageous (the latter was what was expected, however not written down, so the room was unfortunately cleared out). Drinks were provided "on consumption" and this proved to be a cheaper option than going with the 2 hour drinks packages offered.

Conference Dinner

The Conference dinner on Saturday night was well attended. The meal was again buffet style, however food was ample and tables quickly served. Drinks (red & white wine, sparkling, beer and soft drinks) were again provided "on consumption" and this was far cheaper than the 4 hour drinks packages, coming out at about \$22 per head.

There was a 5 piece band who received rave reviews from attendees. Two of them performed as a duo while guests were having pre-dinner drinks while the other 3 played in the main dinner room. Once they all got together, music was good and dancing was fun!

Sunday outing

The Sunday outing was quite expensive compared to previous conferences at \$90/head (\$85 concession) however still attracted 58 starters. The weather was beautiful (after gale force winds on preceding days). We were picked up by the Mona Roma fast ferry at the WP jetty for a 30 min trip to the Museum of Old and New Art (Mona). Arrangements had to be made for some attendees who had mobility issues and couldn't manage the 99 steps up to the

entrance. Guests were allowed 2 hours at Mona (too long for some to keep walking around), however seating was available throughout the venue for those who just wanted to sit. It was too expensive to eat on site, so we arranged a double decker bus (plus a separate wheelchair taxi) to take attendees to the Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens Restaurant – another buffet lunch, but very good food. Water and a soft drink provided; private purchase of alcohol available if required. After 1 ½ hours to walk around gardens (or sit under a tree), guests were taken back to Wrest Point by 4pm. Guests were able to bring their suitcase and take a taxi to the airport from the Gardens if necessary – only one did so.

Recommendations for future committees

- Select venue early (3 years prior); confirm date with ACSA Executive.
- Ensure availability of walk-in showers, disabled rooms, close proximity from accommodation rooms to conference room.
- Check that conference room large enough to accommodate required rectangle layout with sufficient space for people to sit side by side with open A4 folder plus a bit more (otherwise likely to be only chair space for each person).
- Extend block bookings to include at least one night either side of conference dates (plus additional time as required by Executive members)
- Company display room should be immediately adjacent to conference room (ideally where morning/afternoon teas and lunches are served).
- Make sure sufficient seating available for lunches.
- Ensure 2 agile/alert observers are available to run roving microphones both days.
- Check hotel rooming list against registration list (we found 2 who had reserved accommodation who had omitted to send their registration forms)
- Provide “final” numbers to venue/s as late as possible – we had several changes (up and down) in last 3 days.
- Be aware that wheelchair access/transport may need to be provided.
- Conference committees should be aware that there will be a number of “free-of-charge” registrants – these are company personnel in accordance with the sponsorship level paid. (Gold, silver or bronze)

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