



MELBOURNE: ONE OF THE WORLD'S TOP CONVENTION CITIES

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The construction of a new 5,000 seat Convention Centre and three new hotels - including Australia's largest - will ensure Melbourne retains its status as one of the world's top convention cities, according to Melbourne Convention + Visitors Bureau CEO, Sandra Chipchase.

Melbourne already boasts Australia's largest exhibition space and will become home to the nation's largest exhibition and convention precinct when the new Melbourne Convention Centre opens in 2009.

"The \$370 million Melbourne Convention Centre, currently under construction, was recently awarded a 6 Star Green Star environmental rating - a world first" Ms Chipchase said.

"A 394-room Hilton hotel is being built as part of the Melbourne Convention Centre Development in the city's newest suburb, South Wharf, while the city's third Crown hotel - and the nation's largest at 658 rooms - is scheduled to open in 2010."

A new Travelodge is also being built in the CBD and the Rialto Hotel in Collins Street is being refurbished and will become a five star Intercontinental hotel. Both the Grand Hyatt and Hilton on the Park are undergoing \$40 million refurbishments. The Melbourne CBD currently has more than 14,800 rooms while the broader Melbourne tourism region has more than 23,000 accommodation rooms.

"The construction of these hotels and the new Convention Centre, coupled with our ongoing success in attracting international association meetings to Melbourne, makes me confident Melbourne will hang on to its high world ranking as a premier convention city," Ms. Chipchase said.

Melbourne Airport has just embarked on a \$330 million upgrade of its international terminal and the Melbourne Aquarium is undergoing an expansion program.

Ms Chipchase said Melbourne was also looking forward to the opening of the Southern Star Observation Wheel at Waterfront City in the rapidly evolving Docklands precinct.

"The observation wheel will have 21 air-conditioned glass enclosed capsules rising 120 metres in the air from which passengers will have a birds-eye view of the city and Port Phillip Bay. It's expected to open later this year and attract 1.5 million visitors annually."

"Docklands is also home to Atlantic Group [v] at Central Pier, a beautiful converted warehouse which offers four waterfront venue spaces facing Victoria Harbour including the Peninsula Room which is able to accommodate up to 2,500 people for a cocktail function," Ms Chipchase said.

Last year Melbourne was ranked Australia's Number One Convention City by the Union of International Associations (UIA) and is currently 24th in the world according to the International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA).

Business events are directly responsible for more than 14,000 jobs in Victoria and generate \$1.2 billion for the Victorian economy.

Ms Chipchase said Melbourne was also growing its share of the lucrative incentive travel market and that the MCVB was beginning to see returns on its investment in a dedicated Incentives Unit, including securing 8,000 people from Greater China coming to Melbourne for the Amway Greater China Leadership Seminar this April.

"MCVB representatives in Europe, the US and more recently Asia have been very successful at establishing Melbourne as a desirable destination for overseas companies that reward their high-performing staff with trips overseas," Ms Chipchase said.

"Melbourne is already recognised internationally as the sporting and cultural events capital of Australia and we hope soon to also be recognised as the nation's business events capital."

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