

MCB reports solid performance despite pandemic

The Melbourne Convention Bureau (MCB) has outlined a solid performance in the 2019-20 financial year in its Annual Report released today, despite the disruptive effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Victoria's lead agency for acquiring and delivering business events, secured 145 business events reinforcing the State's reputation as Australia's event capital. These events are expected to inject \$234.3 million in economic contribution to Victoria's visitor economy in the coming years.

Speaking at the company's Annual General Meeting held virtually, MCB Chief Executive Officer Julia Swanson reflected on the year that evolved into two halves – the time pre-COVID19 and the months after its onset and the bureau's swift response in navigating the challenges presented by this situation.

"We responded quickly to rapidly changing market conditions with our number one goal to maintain as much future business as possible. This involved continued support to the industry and significant digital transformation with an active focus on maintaining long-lead business.

"MCB has worked tirelessly with our clients to reschedule their business events, rather than cancel. We've had success here, with 70 per cent of planned events rescheduled into future years, thanks to MCB's strong client relationships and our partners' flexibility," said Ms. Swanson.

MCB announced that before the business events sector shuttered in March 2020, Melbourne hosted 140 business events previously secured by the bureau, attracting over 98,6000 visitors – 47 per cent more than the previous year and generating in excess of \$295 million in economic contribution for the State's economy.

Currently managing over \$532 million worth of bids that have the potential to contribute 258,000 room nights for the hotel and accommodation sector, MCB confirmed 117 secured business events for Melbourne from calendar year 2021 to 2026¹.

"This is significantly more than usual so we feel confident in the long-term outlook for our sector," Ms. Swanson said. "It is testament to the resilience of our industry, the can-do attitude of the MCB Team and Team Melbourne – our partners, and with support from the Victorian Government, Visit Victoria, Melbourne Convention & Exhibition Centre, City of Melbourne and Business Events Australia."

Swanson also acknowledged the Victorian Government's continued investment to support the bureau to bring visitors from Australia and the world to its business events as part of a \$9.7 million boost to the Business Events Program.

"This year has been one of the most challenging for our industry and this commitment demonstrates that business events will play a large role in recovery efforts for our State and supports a broadened focus of MCB's business event acquisition into the domestic business events market.

¹ As at 30 June 2020.

“It will support us to acquire as much business as possible and funnel the economic impact from these events to MCB stakeholders and partners.”

MCB already has a presence in the national business event space, with a strong pipeline of national leads and a team ready to activate in line with Victoria’s Business Events roadmap.

“What has defined the business events industry in Victoria has been the inspiring way it has reacted to the challenges presented by COVID-19. While we continue to work through these challenges, we are looking to welcoming business events visitors to Victoria as restrictions continue to ease.

“The best outcomes come from working together through difficult times. And together will continue to focus on strengthening Melbourne’s position as a global leader in business events.” said Ms. Swanson.

Ms Anne Jamieson, Chief Operating Officer, Saxton Speakers Bureau and Vice Chair of Victorian Tourism Industry Council (VTIC), was elected for a three-year term as Director, replacing outgoing Director, Ben Sington. Mr Peter King, Chief Executive Officer, Melbourne Convention & Exhibition Centre was also re-elected for a further three-year term as Director.

Chris Barlow former MCB Board Chair who stepped down in early 2020 was acknowledged for the extraordinary support provided to the Board and the MCB team during his 12 year’s Board service.

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