

PCB to build on China growth, widen regional reach through Tourism WA

NEW Perth Convention Bureau (PCB) chief executive Paul Beeson says the imminent announcement of direct daily flights between Perth and China is tipped to drive down air fares to Asia and bring thousands more tourists - including business tourists to Western Australia.

He was commenting on plans by China Southern Airlines to introduce a three-times weekly A330 service between Perth and Guangzhou, southern China's largest city. "We'll be investigating the business events opportunities that mainland China may bring," he said.

Beeson said studies commissioned by Tourism Western Australia had shown that an international delegate spends up to six times more than a leisure tourist.

"Tourism Research Australia's international visitor survey estimated 12,000 Chinese visitors came to WA in 2010 - the fastest growing international market, up 32.1 per cent from 2009. So little wonder that positive dialogue between China Southern Airlines would only strengthen our economy via the business events industry.

"In addition, to a substantial industry project in development that will leverage this air access, the PCB will continue to



Paul Beeson: China business tourism looks promising.

monitor the progress of this new market through our partnership with Tourism WA and we'll pursue any new opportunities vigorously," he said.

Previously the Bureau's director of business development for three years, Beeson took over his new role last month, succeeding Christine Allen, who he pointed out had left the PCB in an "ideal shape".

"I'm fortunate to be stepping into the leadership role of the PCB while it's in such great shape. I'm also fortunate to have been resourced by our board to recruit the executive team that supported and were essential partners in the Bureau's past success. Having been a part of that successful team - and with a background in marketing and development - I could clearly identify the executives we needed to facilitate and lead these core elements of the Bureau's business. PCB has now been restructured; its management tiers have been reduced and the executive team empowered to lead the bureau into an era of renewed strategies and success."

Beeson said he also was mindful that while the PCB's core business was business development and marketing, it was fundamentally a stakeholder and member-based organisation. "As such, we'll be resourcing our membership arm to reflect this, and provide members with greater value for their membership dollar.

"Our regions north and south of Perth have provided an enormous drawcard in national and international conference bids - not only for pre and post spending, but hosting conferences themselves. The calibre and diversity of product is of an

incredible standard, and combined with that of Perth, greater Western Australia provides the ideal range and scope for any conference scenario. For this reason, we'll be working more closely with our regions.

"In addition to this, I hope to more closely align the PCB strategically with our key stakeholders - Tourism Western Australia and the City of Perth, which help us drive the business events industry, and build stronger relationships for the benefit of our members."

Beeson said the next financial year would be one of growth and opportunity for the business events industry in Western Australia. "But, of course, as in any industry, there are always issues that we need to address. A high Australian dollar and the growing pains of infrastructure improvements may hinder our ability to secure business.

"However, the City of Perth and its surrounds will benefit from an enormous range of infrastructure improvements. Substantial investments are being made to refurbish and upgrade our existing accommodations and venues. These initiatives will improve the visitor experience and ensure our city remains competitive in the market.

Complementing these destination



area, accommodation to suit any budget can be found. There are more than 6000 star-rated rooms and 260 accommodation providers in the central business district alone.

"The issue is more about accommodation displacement where business events delegates may be competing with a mid-week influx of corporate travellers. I see the role of the PCB as being to increase the amount of

improvements are our innovative marketing projects, including our partnerships with universities, hospital and medical associations. Collectively, these strategies and initiatives will increase our profile nationally and internationally, improve the visitor experience and ensure Perth and Western Australia remain pre-eminent in the business events market."

Asked if the lack of accommodation in Perth was jeopardising the city's chances of attracting new and repeat business, Beeson said that like any bureau in the midst of a burgeoning economy, the PCB viewed the expansion in capacity of both convention space and accommodation as an ideal.

"However, this must be development that is viable in the long-term. The current issue we face is less about a lack of hotel infrastructure; With more than 10,000 rooms available in the greater metropolitan

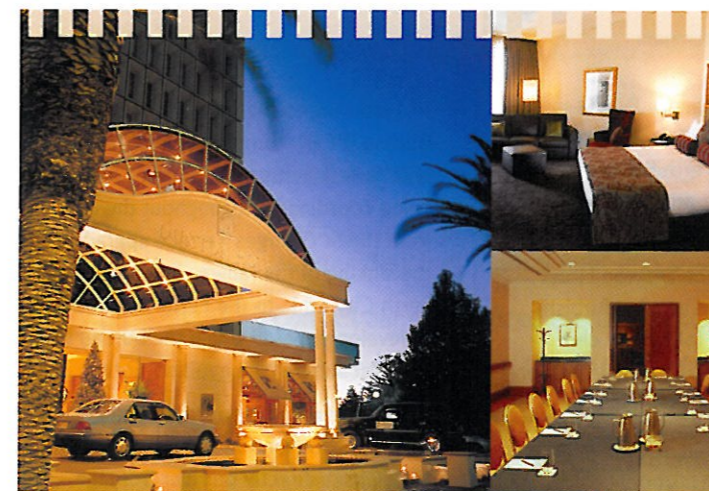
high-yield business event delegates to counter this short-term issue. For example, I recently announced the expansion of our successful scholarship series, which now includes a partnership with the largest medical association in Australasia. It will ensure Perth captures a larger proportion of the high-yield medical conferencing market, and is the first-ever partnership this college has initiated with a convention bureau - and the first of its kind for Australasia, and from our research, the world.

Finally, the staging of the 2011 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in Perth this October will be an ideal illustration of the strengths Perth holds in both capacity and destination quality - in fact, no better event could be held to showcase our great city," added Beeson.

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