

Media Release



Adelaide has hosted the State's largest business event since pre-COVID - and it signals the re-opening of a sector that adds significantly to the State's economic growth targets

With South Australia described as one of the most COVID-Safe destinations in the world, business events are again operating in Adelaide to assist delivery of the State's new COVID-normal economic growth.

With an advance COVID-Safe sign off from Health SA, and the department's attendance to witness and congratulate on how well some 200 professional delegates at the controlled event conducted themselves, SA's Adelaide Convention Bureau (ACB) organised and delivered the State's largest business event since March.

The *Connect SA* conference was held at the Adelaide Convention Centre; its prime objective being to give the business event sector confidence that such events can be held NOW and successfully, and the event's main guest panel included Penny Lion from Business Events Australia. Who spoke positively of what was ahead despite international travel mostly on hold until well into 2021. The panel spoke of the thirst for face to face reconnection and of the invaluable knowledge transfer such events provide.

Most *Connect SA* delegates were ACB members and their event clients, and the event's associated exhibition with 44 exhibitors reported national and local business dealings successfully conducted.

Connect SA is a clear signal of a national re-opening for the business event sector, but most especially for SA which has the nation's strongest COVID-Safe sector. "We have that because we began preparing for the sector's reopening from the beginning of COVID. We knew we must be ready, and we are," said ACB Chief Executive Damien Kitto.

"*Connect SA* adds another success for the ACB on behalf of the State because we already bested the nation by achieving an 85 per cent success in postponing booked 2020 business events into 2021 and 2022," he said.

The ACB's **SA FE** end to end (airport to airport) COVID-safe promise campaign which was launched in June to attract prospective national clients, is now also attracting more than two dozen events which had previously been booked into the eastern States. "With the visible success of *Connect SA* we now intend for more to follow," said Mr Kitto.

"The success of *Connect SA* which included food service, the exhibition and the COVID-safe movement of delegates in and out of different rooms was impressive," he said. "It has given Health SA, and us, the confidence to secure national business events here even before the end of 2020. Restarting these events is critical to the State's economy, something that has not really been recognised in SA - as it had been in other States and Internationally - until recently."

The ACB's latest annual report shows that the organization has secured some \$208 million for the State in the FY 2019/20 even with the advent of COVID and a return on investment to Government of some 160%.

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Mr Kitto said the ACB set out to win (in a highly competitive market) conferences with delegates most aligned to SA's stated economic pillars including Advanced Technologies, Biomed, Agtech, Space and Defence. "Not all of the conferences we set out to win for the State are in those sectors of course," he said. "Those that are, we can show lead to business partnerships, research collaborations, and even the move of subject matter specialists into SA as residents.

"Those conferences not directly connected to the economic pillars have just as strong an economic imperative," he said. "They have economic outcomes such as their daily delegate spend of more than \$632 compared with a tourist daily spend of less than \$200. "

"And of course such delegates insist on our highest level of hotel accommodation. We know that they too conduct successful business here both with local and national delegates. And we must never forget the benefit to local delegates who at such a conference gain the opportunity to hear from and meet global leaders in their field. That is such an amazing opportunity – and one that comes without the cost of an airfare to the other side of the world."

Mr Kitto said that the ACB is now working with its members to ensure they were ready to manage the new COVID-normal and welcome more large events for the State.

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