



## By Alan Trotter

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**It must be because it is spring and spring always brings forth positive thoughts but I have a feeling that 2012 is going to be a momentous year for the New Zealand convention industry for a variety of reasons.**

Most of these reasons concern announcements around infrastructure for New Zealand which will take the destination to the next level in terms of its international and domestic offering. Obviously, the proposed international convention centre (ICC) announced by the Prime Minister some months ago will need to have further detailed negotiations between the proposer SKYCITY and the New Zealand Government. Assuming there is no change of government in the November election these negotiations hopefully will come to a successful conclusion some time in 2012. Now I am very much aware of the worries around problem gambling which have been aired by many opponents of the proposal and I fully concede there are a small proportion of people who engage in gambling who are in fact addicted to it.

# Springing into positive territory

However, my understanding is after some research, that these figures are not that large especially when compared to alcohol addiction. Whilst I wish in no way to make light of the problem I think we need to put it in context. The interesting thing I have picked up from all the discussions around this issue is that all the opponents of SKYCITY being involved in the ICC because of problem gambling, agree that there is a need in New Zealand for an international convention centre, which is fit for purpose, located in Auckland. However, the problem has always been that just wishing something to happen and agreeing that it is a good thing is not enough. Unfortunately, someone has to pay for it.

In the current economic climate it is not feasible to expect the New Zealand tax payer or the rate payers of Auckland to pick up the tab for an infrastructural development that could easily cost half a billion dollars including land acquisition, construction, and fit out. What we have on the table is a proposal from a public listed company to provide the facility for New Zealand at no cost to either the New Zealand tax payer or the rate payers of Auckland.

I am not naïve. There are sound business reasons for SKYCITY to undertake this development and they are not doing this for altruistic reasons. However, the opportunity is simply too good to pass up and I sincerely hope that the negotiations are concluded to the satisfaction of all parties and any issues around problem gambling are somehow mitigated and managed and we all move on towards a great outcome in terms of a fit for purpose international convention centre that will enable New Zealand to foot it with the 'big boys' in the Australasian region for hosting large to medium sized international conventions.

## Christchurch centre

The other good news I would like to see in 2012 is the announcement that Christchurch will rebuild its convention centre that was badly damaged in the February 22 earthquake, and not only will it rebuild the facility but will considerably enlarge the footprint to accommodate up to 3,000 plus delegates.

There was a plan by the previous VBase management to undertake an expansion of the facility which was based on very sound business reasons as Christchurch was enjoying significant patronage from both domestic and international convention organisers and was really punching well above its weight in the market.

Because of the tragic events of February 2011, the city has a fantastic opportunity now to literally rebuild itself and I understand the plans for an expanded new convention centre are part of the plan for the CBD. Coupled with all the other exciting developments that are planned in terms of hotels, shops, restaurants and other infrastructure, I would suggest that Christchurch when it finally does complete the rebuild of its CBD will be a serious competitor for all cities in our region.

I understand that the proposed time frame for the completion of the rebuild will be 2016. Given the fact that the ICC should be up and running hopefully in 2015, New Zealand will have two superb internationally competitive convention facilities that will really take the country to the next level in its international competitiveness for medium to large scale international conventions.

Now I can hear you all say that's great but who is going to fill these facilities? That indeed is the 64 million dollar question. The

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last thing New Zealand wants is a trend where infrastructure development roars ahead and virtually more than doubles the amount of space currently available in New Zealand, and precisely at the time that this trajectory and infrastructural development is going upwards the international marketing is going the other way.

CINZ, in conjunction with its industry partners Tourism New Zealand and Air New Zealand, is in the process of finalising a refresh of its international convention marketing strategy and the parties are very cognisant of the fact that there is possibly a huge increase in infrastructural development imminent and all the parties recognise that the international

marketing of New Zealand as a convention destination must also accelerate with the infrastructural development. However, this is easier said than done, and the strategy refresh will be presented to the industry at the CINZ Annual Conference in Wellington on November 16 and 17. Both CINZ and Tourism New Zealand will speak on the subject. These presentations will be followed by a Q & A session attended by myself, senior management from Tourism New Zealand and Air New Zealand.

## Fantastic opportunity

New Zealand has a fantastic opportunity

in front of it to really go to the next level with its convention offering, particularly in the international market. It is essential that the development of infrastructure is accompanied by increased international marketing efforts to ensure that any new facility will be well utilised especially by incremental new international convention business. The economic benefits accruing from this incremental business have been well documented and are considerable, and given the challenges that New Zealand faces in the New Zealand international export arena any increase in foreign exchange earnings being generated as a result of increased convention activity will be most welcome.



# Planing with Paulene

**Conventions & Incentives New Zealand (CINZ) takes great pride in its annual publication, believing that it is truly the 'Bible' for convention planners, not only in New Zealand, but also overseas.**

to help event organisers to plan their next conference, meeting, incentive or event.

Providing valuable behind the scenes administration support, Paulene Brommer is a key member of the CINZ team. Her primary role is to assist with the coordination and distribution of the CINZ Event Planners Guide from client communication, liaising with the design team, to proofing and the signing-off of advertisements.

She also provides admin support to the large annual events such as the CINZ Conference

as well as MEETINGS – New Zealand's only annual, national, business tourism event for the conference, meetings, events, exhibition and incentive travel industry. Other key duties include management and maintenance of the large client database of key conference and incentive buyers.

Don't miss out on the new 2012 Event Planners Guide due out early next year – register to receive your complimentary copy by emailing Paulene at [Paulene@nzconventions.co.nz](mailto:Paulene@nzconventions.co.nz)

The focus of the CINZ Event Planners Guide is on providing the best and most comprehensive information all in one place. The Planner assists in selecting the best operators from the convention, event and incentive sectors of tourism

## More than a boardroom

**Oratia's cellar door, Artisan Wines is gaining traction in the business events market offering more than just an offsite boardroom for meetings.**

Although much of its repeat business has been for small strategic meetings, training and team building - type events, as well as Christmas functions, director Maria Sunde says the peaceful vineyard just 30 minutes from Auckland's CBD is hosting an increasingly wide range of events beyond the boardroom.

'We've hosted high-end incentive groups from the US, a book launch, as well as film and television companies producing documentaries, food and wine pieces, entertainment videos and advertisements. They like the peaceful country setting so close to the city.'

Artisan's boardroom takes 10 comfortably and the restaurant seats 40, but larger scale groups (240) can be catered for in a marquee

on the lawn, or in the adjacent Farmers Market area.

'People can bring in their own caterers – we've had spit roasts and barbeques – and wine can be purchased from our cellar door.'

Artisan hosts the Oratia Farmers Market on Saturdays as well as Sunday summer music events. The connection with the Farmers Market has provided opportunities for 'Meet the Maker' events where guests can partake in sessions such as cheese making and wine education.

'Of course 'Meet the Maker' sessions are ideal for corporate events as well,' says Sunde. Artisan's Oratia vineyard now has organic certification and the restaurant sources as much organic and/or locally produced food as possible.



Inbound incentive groups have enjoyed local produce at the Oratia Farmers Market. Artisan wines can bring the producers to the cellar door for Meet the Maker events.