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EVOLVE 2022 – THAT’S A WRAP!

It was fantastic to watch the events community come together in Melbourne last week for MEA’s Evolve 2022.

A Melbourne laneway inspired Welcome Reception greeted in person delegates on 29 June, where the team from Sofitel Melbourne On Collins put on a fantastic display of entertainment – complete with dancing kids, drag queens, a DJ and renowned artist Gosia Wlodarczak who sketched a one-night only masterpiece to commemorate the evening.

The next day, more than 300 delegates, whether they were there in person or tuned in online, were treated to a fantastic line-up of professional speakers, industry experts, and business events trailblazers.

Highlights of the jam-packed educational program included former Head of Innovation and Creativity for Disney, Duncan Wardle, who proved that face to face isn’t the only way to fully engage an audience. His delightful ‘Think Different – The Disney Way!’ keynote had the audience brainstorming creative event ideas with their neighbour starting with the words ‘*What If...*’.

Retired Royal Australian Navy Commodore Martin Brooker’s ‘Leadership Under Fire’ keynote spoke to many about how to lead under pressure and in times of uncertainty – something everyone in the events industry would be intimately acquainted with after the last two years of challenges. He shared an anecdote about the need to ride the wave in times of stormy waters, and that once you are on the other side - you can focus on righting the ship, coming about face, and pointing yourself towards the storm’s eye.

In addition to hosting the day, Holly Ransom delivered a session counselling that astute leading is done through managing your energy, not your time, and that the future is determined by what we do today. Her insight in taking the steps towards change one bite-sized action at a time is something every busy event professional can appreciate.

Shark attack survivor Brett Connellan’s story was one that had the audience on the edges of their seats. “Failure is not aiming high and missing – but aiming low and hitting” was his insightful message. For a guy who has faced the impossible and overcome it, it’s an informed perspective.

The various breakout session presenters, panellists and moderators delivered insights on Best Practice, Building Confidence and Future Leaders. From Graeme Cowan’s mindful minute that had everyone on their feet to Matt Whisker’s informative look at experiential event design, there were multiple takeaway learnings offered up for everyone in attendance.

The day concluded with a ClubMEA social where delegates squeezed in one last round of networking over drinks and canapes.

MEA would like to thank everyone who was involved in bringing Evolve 2022 to fruition. After multiple postponed attempts to host the conference in-person, it was a pleasure to be able to



facilitate another conference where the Australian event community were able to come together, connect, and then leave with skills to restore confidence in face-to-face events.

A big thank you to the hospitality of the [Sofitel Melbourne On Collins](#) team who went above and beyond to make all feel welcome, and through the support and work of our Platinum Partners [Melbourne Convention Bureau](#), [EventsAir](#) and [Touchpoint](#) MEA was able to ensure Evolve was a successful event for all. MEA encourages its community to support those who support it, especially as we enter a new financial year and the confidence of in-person business events grows.

As for next year's conference destination...watch this space.

About MEA: Meetings & Events Australia is the collective voice of the events industry in Australia. With the largest network of event professionals in Australia, MEA has been supporting the careers of our members and advancing the interests of the event industry since 1975. MEA's membership represents the largest community of businesses and individuals across the Australian events industry that employs more than 229,000 professionals who stage, produce, manage, support and supply the 480,000+ events held in Australia annually. These events include major events, festivals, conferences, meetings, exhibitions, launches, seminars, special events, community events and much more for associations, corporations, government and the general public.

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