

## Payment for access to public-funded schemes leaves a very sour taste

NO-ONE would deny the importance of governments - federal, state, local - in the marketing of destinations and major events. Generally, we welcome their financial and human input. But there's a limit.

Australia is, for the most part, well served by its government tourism departments and statutory bodies.

While 30 years ago they might have taken a 'we know best' approach, that aloofness was eroded as the industry became much more assertive and more involved in the bigger picture.

From the mid-1970s and into the 1980s and early 1990s, we evolved from looking inward at our own specifics and became more active, more sophisticated in the process of data gathering, strategy development, marketing and co-ordinated bids.

We also became very passionate. Looking back, industry veterans today might well smile wryly at our focus back then on 'deep and meaningful' topics that we debated at length. Things change. The public agencies sought us out, driven largely but not entirely by the need for funding partnerships. Younger recruits to the tourism authorities brought a wider mindset and often the benefit of a few years in the private sector. They were public servants second, tourism professionals first.

That was to the benefit of everyone and we gladly went into formal and less structured partnerships, working towards a common good which might not always have been clearly identified but was well-intentioned. There was a strong degree of trust.

Now, however, there appears to be an insidious trend, in Australia and elsewhere, towards some publicly-funded tourism authorities insisting that private operators pay fees and gain accreditation before they can access the services these public agencies offer.

That would make sense if, for instance, a co-operative advertising campaign were in the pipeline. Obviously the private sector must put up their dollars to become involved.

But when it comes to insisting that a private company or individual pay a fee just to be let past the front door, it smells a little. Services that have been funded by the taxpayer should not be the subject of ransom demands.

Let's hope this trend is simply a matter of mishandling or awkward structuring. The alternative, which some have claimed, is that such policy is aiming towards the expansion of power bases. That is unacceptable, a long way from the private-public co-operation we built in the past and which has served us so effectively.

- Kelvin King



## Vin Barron Award for Lonne

THE ASSOCIATION of Australian Convention Bureaux (AACB) has awarded the 2010 IMEX-AACB Vin Barron Award for Australian Bureaux staff to Deborah Lonne, a coordinator with Brisbane's economic development agency, Brisbane Marketing.

This award is designed to foster career development and encourage excellence in the future leaders environment of Australia's convention bureaux. The prize was renamed in 2008 in honour of Vin Barron, ex-chief executive of the Tasmania Convention Bureau.

As the AACB winner, Lonne was presented with return air travel to Frankfurt with Qantas Airways, accommodation in Frankfurt, a cash allowance for expenses, free attendance at IMEX 2010 and will also be presenting her thoughts on 'the challenges facing a destination promoting itself for business events in the next decade' at the IMEX-MPI Future Leaders Forum being held in Frankfurt, Germany.

AACB executive director, Mike Cannon, said Lonne had impressed the judges with her positive and proactive attitude and the clarity of her submission.



Deborah Lonne is pictured accepting the award from Ray Bloom.

## KÖLNDÜSSELDORF

The Meetropolis.



## Cologne, Dusseldorf link in 'Meetropolis'

'MEETROPOLIS' is the new brand name used by German cities Cologne and Düsseldorf to jointly advertise locations for meetings and congresses.

In future, both the Cologne Convention Bureau and the convention bureau Düsseldorf will be represented under the new brand at trade fair presentations and in advertising campaigns.

Located 40 km apart, in the most populous German state (North Rhine-Westphalia) the two metropolises are among Germany's major business, science and communication centres. The two capitals also rank very highly as meeting and congress destinations, appearing in the Top 5 most popular German conference destinations. Together, they are home to nearly 300 event facilities, two big exhibition centres and more than 450 hotels.

The first official 'appearance' of the two bureaux under the shared 'Meetropolis' brand was at IMEX in Frankfurt, Germany.