

# AUSTRALIAN EVENT AWARDS & SYMPOSIUM

## AUSTRALIAN EVENT SYMPOSIUM

Two days of skill building, learning  
and networking with your industry

**REGISTER TODAY!**

Coffs Harbour, NSW **13 - 15 October 2025**

[www.eventawards.com.au](http://www.eventawards.com.au)

## REGISTRATION INFORMATION

Full Event Symposium Registration	\$1,250 + GST
Day 1 (Tuesday) Symposium Registration	\$665 + GST
Day 2 (Wednesday) Symposium Registration	\$637 + GST
Event Symposium Registration Only (No Awards Ceremony)	\$950 + GST

## MONDAY 13 OCTOBER 2025

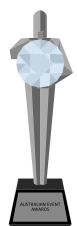
TIME	SESSION	VENUE
1:00pm - 5:00pm	<b>Destination Famil</b>  Kick off your Australian Event Symposium experience with an exclusive pre-event famil showcasing the diversity, culture, and versatility of the Coffs Coast. From stunning lookout views to iconic attractions and unique venues, this tailored itinerary is designed to give event professionals a taste of what makes this region the perfect destination for all kinds of events.	Coffs Harbour
5:00pm - 7:00pm	<b>Welcome Drinks</b>  Ahead of the busy Symposium programme, join us for Welcome Drinks – an opportunity to catch up with colleagues and industry friends at the Hoey Moey, a long-time favourite with locals and visitors alike. From national touring bands and headline acts to a treasure trove of local musical talent, this coastal pub champions all things live music. Enjoy relaxed vibes, shared platters and drinks as you soak up the energy of this much-loved Coffs institution.	<b>The Hoey Moey</b>  84 Ocean Parade, Coffs Harbour

# TUESDAY 14 OCTOBER 2025

TIME	SESSION
8:30am - 9:00am	<b>ARRIVAL TEA AND COFFEE</b>
9:00am - 10:30am	<b>Welcome To The Australian Event Symposium</b>  A short welcome from Managing Director, Ian Steigrad  <b>OPENING PLENARY</b>  <b>The Synergy Between Events and Regional Tourism</b>  Events help contribute to the growth of the local region through media exposure, attracting future visitation, providing opportunities for the local community to contribute towards the event and an opportunity for visitors to experience the best the region has to offer. Festivals, food and wine events, exhibitions, conferences, corporate events have the potential to venture outside of capital cities but what can they do to ensure it's beneficial for them? The key is to build a strong relationship between the Destination and the Event and work together to ensure there is benefit for both parties. So where do you start? What do you look for? This session will delve into the relationship from both sides and how to maximise the collaboration to benefit everyone.  <b>SPEAKERS:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● <b>Linda Tillman</b>, Tilma Group &amp; Australian Centre for Regional Events</li><li>● <b>Michael Thurston</b>, Destination North Coast NSW</li><li>● <b>Greg Donovan</b>, The Outback Music Festival Group</li></ul>
10:30am - 11:00am	<b>MORNING TEA AND COFFEE BREAK</b>



TIME	SESSION
11:00am - 12:30pm	<b>CONCURRENT SESSIONS</b>
	<p><b>Crowded Places: Industry Update on Current Threat Level for Events and Responsibilities</b></p> <p>Australia's current National Terrorism Threat Level is "probable". Following the December 2024 vehicle attack on the Magdeburg Christmas Market in Germany, what should we be doing to safeguard event participants at outdoor events?</p> <p><b>SPEAKER:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Craig Sheridan APM</b>, Sheridan Consulting Group</li> </ul>
	<p><b>What's Hot and What's Not in the World of Talent and Conference Design</b></p> <p>In today's rapidly evolving event landscape, staying ahead of trends is key to creating impactful and memorable conferences. This session will dive deep into what's currently driving innovation in talent and conference design, as well as what's beginning to lose relevance. From the rise of hybrid experiences to the growing importance of inclusivity and diversity, we'll explore how conferences are shifting to better engage audiences and deliver value. We'll also highlight outdated approaches that no longer resonate with modern attendees, and discuss how to refresh your event strategy to align with the latest best practices. Expect actionable insights on the latest tech, design strategies, and talent engagement models, ensuring you leave with fresh ideas to elevate your next conference.</p> <p><b>SPEAKER:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>David Green</b>, DG global Events &amp; Entertainment</li> </ul>
	<p><b>The Importance of Festivals in Australia's Culture</b></p> <p>Festivals are one of the biggest assets to Australia's community and culture. They provide access to the arts, provide significant social and economic benefits and support the local community. But in this uncertain time of financial constraints, the loss of festivals is suppressing the arts, the innovation from the creative minds and diversity in the offering available to the community. So what can we do to overcome the uncertainty? How do we encourage the community to get behind the festivals and support them more than before?</p> <p><b>SPEAKERS:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Harry Barry</b>, North Coast Hotel Group</li> <li>● <b>Peter Noble</b>, Bluesfest Byron Bay</li> <li>● <b>Ben Lewis</b>, Gig Big</li> </ul>
12:30pm - 1:30pm	<b>LUNCH BREAK</b>



**AUSTRALIAN  
EVENT AWARDS**

TIME	SESSION
1:30pm - 3:00pm	<p><b>CONCURRENT SESSIONS</b></p> <p><b>Stay True While Moving Forward: A Case Study: The Deni Ute Muster's 10-Year Evaluation into a Family Festival</b></p> <p>Vicky Lowry shares the strategic transformation of one of Australia's most iconic rural events. Once a celebration of Ute culture and outback spirit, the Deni Ute Muster has evolved into a multi-generational festival that welcomes 20,000 attendees, including record numbers of children and families. This journey has been shaped by intentional programming, infrastructure investment, community partnerships, and a strong commitment to maintaining the authenticity of its rural roots. Attendees will gain valuable insights into how to navigate growth, respond to changing audience expectations, and future-proof legacy events, without losing what makes them unique.</p> <p><b>SPEAKER:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Vicky Lowry</b>, Deni Play on the Plains Festival Ltd</li> </ul> <p><b>Myth Buster: Business Events in Regional Destinations - The Challenges and the Hurdles</b></p> <p>Regional destinations are often overlooked as the host destination for Business Events with the decision driven by the perception that it's too hard to get to, too costly and generally, too hard. This session will break down these challenges, identify the support available to Business Events and the benefits to attendees and clients in hosting a regional Business Event.</p> <p><b>SPEAKERS:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Michael Thurston</b>, Destination North Coast NSW</li> <li>● <b>Simon Latchford</b>, City of Coffs Harbour</li> </ul> <p><b>Sustainability: Making a Positive Impact</b></p> <p>In an ever-evolving climate, sustainability initiatives have transformed and grown. What can we, as an industry do, to 'do our bit' and make our events and contributions to events more sustainable without increasing the budget? Whose responsibility is it to drive the sustainability – venues, organisers, clients? This session will delve into a budget-friendly exploration of the initiatives the industry can tap into, partnerships to engage with and how to overcome the challenges of engaging in sustainable practices.</p> <p><b>SPEAKERS:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Melissa Hamilton</b>, EarthCheck</li> <li>● <b>Andrew Cameron-Smith</b>, Wonderment</li> </ul>
3:00pm - 3:30pm	<b>AFTERNOON TEA BREAK</b>

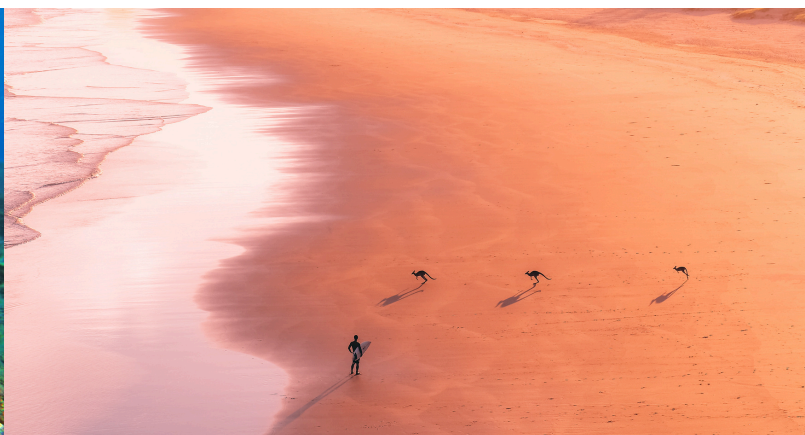


TIME	SESSION
3:30pm - 4:45pm	<p><b>PLENARY</b></p> <p><b>From Trusted Advisor to Value Creator: Elevate Every Event Through Measurable Impact</b></p> <p>This session transforms how event managers, suppliers to the industry, venues and conference organisers view the Trusted Advisor role, showing that everyone, from internal service providers to frontline staff, has the power and responsibility to deliver measurable value at every touchpoint. By tackling the global trust deficit, defining what truly builds trust in commercial settings, and leveraging listening and questioning skills, attendees will learn to uncover authentic stakeholder needs and master the equation of value that underpins every memorable event.</p> <p>With practical frameworks from The Sales Revolution™ and A Culture of Customer™, participants will instil Customer Consciousness™ and Commercial Competence in their teams, boosting loyalty, maximising impact, and ensuring the benefits always outweigh the costs for every stakeholder. Leave ready to deliver exceptional, measurable value that sets your events apart.</p> <p><b>SPEAKER:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Ingrid Maynard</b>, Author and Founder and Managing Director of The Sales Docto</li> </ul>
4:45pm - 5:45pm	<b>DELEGATE TIME TO CHANGE FOR DINNER</b>
6:00pm - 9:00pm	<p><b>DINNER AT AANUKA BEACH HOUSE</b></p> <p>Tropical Vibes by the Sea, step into holiday mode at the newly renovated Aanuka Beach House – the Coffs Coast's hottest new venue by the Tilley &amp; Wills Group. With beach club vibes, ocean views, entertainment, dinner and drinks, this is your chance to experience a slice of tropical island fun without leaving the mainland.</p>
9:00pm	<b>END OF DAY</b>



# WEDNESDAY 15 OCTOBER 2025

TIME	SESSION
8:30am - 9:00am	<b>ARRIVAL TEA AND COFFEE</b>
9:00am - 10:15am	<b>CONCURRENT SESSIONS</b>  <b>Rethinking Early Commitment: Responding to the Rise of Last-Minute Registrations</b>  More and more attendees are leaving their event registrations to the last minute—despite the long-standing tradition of early bird pricing. As a result, organisers are facing increased uncertainty around budgeting, catering, venue planning, and delegate materials, often needing to make critical decisions without reliable numbers. This session explores the shifting landscape of attendee behaviour and opens a conversation about how event professionals are responding. Rather than offering fixed answers, it will share examples of incentives and approaches that have been trialled—with varying degrees of success—and invite discussion around how we can collectively adapt our strategies, timelines, and expectations to meet the moment.  <b>SPEAKER:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● <b>Peta Moore</b>, Nectar Creative Communications</li></ul> <b>Organising Small Community Events: Maximising Support and Smooth Operations</b>  The organising of a small community event is a different “kettle of fish” to putting on a large-scale, mass-attendance function: whether it is a commercial, charity or other not-for-profit ‘community’ event, there tends to be a very different set of principles, parameters and priorities for operational efficiency and overall success. This session will deal with that set, with advice and some “guidelines” to maximise the chances of solid support , smooth operations, and achieving your goals for the event.  <b>SPEAKER:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● <b>Simon Balderstone</b>, Ways and Means Consultancy</li></ul>
10:15am - 10:45am	<b>MORNING TEA AND COFFEE BREAK</b>



TIME	SESSION
10:45am - 12:00pm	<b>CONCURRENT SESSIONS</b>
	<p><b>Red Tape, Conflicts of Interest and Contradictory Rules – Event Regulation by Local Government</b></p> <p>Australia's current National Terrorism Threat Level is "probable". Following the December 2024 vehicle attack on the Magdeburg Christmas Market in Germany, what should we be doing to safeguard event participants at outdoor events?</p> <p><b>SPEAKER:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Garry O'Dell</b>, Land Use Planning Scholar</li> </ul>
	<p><b>The Cohesive Bind Between Exhibitions and Conferences</b></p> <p>In today's rapidly evolving event landscape, staying ahead of trends is key to creating impactful and memorable conferences. This session will dive deep into what's currently driving innovation in talent and conference design, as well as what's beginning to lose relevance. From the rise of hybrid experiences to the growing importance of inclusivity and diversity, we'll explore how conferences are shifting to better engage audiences and deliver value. We'll also highlight outdated approaches that no longer resonate with modern attendees, and discuss how to refresh your event strategy to align with the latest best practices. Expect actionable insights on the latest tech, design strategies, and talent engagement models, ensuring you leave with fresh ideas to elevate your next conference.</p> <p><b>SPEAKERS:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Matt Pearce</b>, Talk2 Media &amp; Events</li> <li>● <b>Emma Bowyer</b>, ICMS Australasia</li> </ul>
12:00pm - 1:00pm	<p><b>Designing for Legacy: Transforming Events into Long-Term Cultural Infrastructure</b></p> <p>Festivals are one of the biggest assets to Australia's community and culture. They provide access to the arts, provide significant social and economic benefits and support the local community. But in this uncertain time of financial constraints, the loss of festivals is suppressing the arts, the innovation from the creative minds and diversity in the offering available to the community. So what can we do to overcome the uncertainty? How do we encourage the community to get behind the festivals and support them more than before?</p> <p><b>SPEAKERS:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Derrin Brown</b>, The Mandala Social</li> <li>● <b>Chris Toward</b>, The Shift Corp</li> <li>● <b>Shane Buzza</b>, Blu Event Productions</li> <li>● <b>Iain Morrison</b>, The Imagination Collection</li> <li>● <b>Katrina de Jersey</b>, KDJ Communique</li> </ul>
	<b>LUNCH BREAK</b>

TIME	SESSION
1:00pm - 2:30pm	<p><b>CONCURRENT SESSIONS</b></p> <p><b>The Value of Public Relations and Communications: Transparency and Accountability in Crisis Management</b></p> <p>Even the best laid plans can come into question – the event has been perfectly planned, everything has fallen into place, but have you planned for the unforeseen, the unexpected? Crisis management is an essential piece of the event planning puzzle. From communication through various channels, to staff trained in safely and effectively managing the attendees and the site – every second in that moment is crucial to successfully navigating the crisis at hand.</p> <p><b>SPEAKERS:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Stephanie Cassimatis</b>, Pink Caviar Events</li> <li>● <b>Chris Hall</b>, Primary Comms Group</li> <li>● <b>Scott Crebbin</b>, Platform 6</li> <li>● <b>Katrina de Jersey</b>, KDJ Communique</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Building Unity: Australian Multicultural Events</b></p> <p>Multicultural events can be seen as bridges between communities – enabling people to share their traditions, cuisine, stories of their homeland and an opportunity for others to ensconce themselves in a different cultural setting. These events build stronger communities, inspire creativity and innovation, and demonstrate inclusivity.</p> <p><b>SPEAKER:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Petra McNeilly Rutledge</b>, National Multicultural Festival</li> <li>● <b>Rebecca Butchart</b>, National Multicultural Festival</li> <li>● <b>Paula Masselos</b>, Embrace Society, Multicultural Communications</li> </ul>
2:30pm - 3:00pm	<b>AFTERNOON TEA BREAK</b>
3:00pm - 4:15pm	<p><b>CLOSING PLENARY</b></p> <p><b>Challenges: Rising Cost of Living vs the Need for Events and Entertainment for Wellbeing</b></p> <p>The arts play a big role in people's happiness and wellbeing but as the cost of living rises, what do events, curators, programming teams, designers and the like need to look at, to continue to encourage attendance, keep it accessible and not go backwards?</p> <p><b>SPEAKERS:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Vickii Cotter</b></li> <li>● <b>David Caffery</b>, Dionysus</li> <li>● <b>Travis Green</b>, Canberra Writers Festival</li> </ul>
4:45pm - 5:45pm	<b>DELEGATE TIME TO CHANGE FOR CEREMONY</b>
6:15pm - 10:30pm	<p><b>AUSTRALIAN EVENT AWARDS CEREMONY</b></p> <p>Join the Events Industry at <b>Wiigulga Sports Complex</b> as the National Winners of the 2025 Australian Event Awards are announced!</p>