



AUSTRALIAN EVENT AWARDS & SYMPOSIUM

AUSTRALIAN EVENT SYMPOSIUM

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

REGISTER TODAY!

Coffs Harbour, NSW **20 - 21 October 2026**

www.eventawards.com.au

REGISTRATION INFORMATION

Full Event Symposium Registration	\$1,200 + GST
Day Symposium Registration (One Day Only) <i>Choose either Tuesday or Wednesday</i>	\$575 + GST
Two Day Event Symposium Registration Only (No Awards Ceremony)	\$900 + GST

Full Event Symposium Registration includes:

- Attendance at all Plenaries and Sessions
- Morning Tea, Lunch and Afternoon Tea
- 1 x ticket to the BBQ Beach Dinner at Aanuka on Tuesday 20 October
- 1 x ticket to the Awards Ceremony Wednesday 21 October

Event Symposium Day Registration Only (no Awards):

- Attendance at all Plenaries and Sessions on the day of your choice - either Tuesday 20 or Wednesday 21 October
- Morning Tea, Lunch and Afternoon Tea on the day of your choice
- 1 x ticket to the BBQ Beach Dinner at Aanuka on Tuesday 20 October
- Conference materials including program

Two Day Event Symposium Registration Only (no Awards):

- Attendance at all Plenaries and Sessions on Wednesday 21 October
- Morning Tea, Lunch and Afternoon Tea on Wednesday 21 October
- 1 x ticket to the BBQ Beach Dinner at Aanuka on Tuesday 20 October
- Conference materials including program

TUESDAY 20 OCTOBER 2026

8:30 - 9:00am	ARRIVAL TEA AND COFFEE	
9:00 - 9:15am	Welcome To The Australian Event Symposium: Managing Director, Ian Steigrad	
9:15 - 10:20am	SESSIONS INTRODUCTION - MORNING Each speaker will have 15 minutes to give delegates an introduction to their topic and from there, delegates can pick which session they wish to attend. There will be an opportunity for Q&A after all presentations. SPEAKERS: ● Tolita Dukes, 8 Seconds ● Cindy Evelyn Elkhouri & Anne-Marie Byrne, Canterbury Bankstown Council ● Andy Lopez & Ben Schubert, Out There Productions ● Carol McCracken, Caravan and Camping WA, Wendy Lacey, TLC Events, Geoff Baker & David George, Oztix	
10:30 - 11:00am	MORNING TEA AND COFFEE BREAK	
11:00am - 12:00pm	SESSION 1 Clone Yourself - AI for Marketers: Build Your Digital Double SPEAKER: Tolita Dukes , 8 Seconds	SESSION 2 Community Event Science: Understanding the DNA Behind Successful Community Events SPEAKERS: Cindy Evelyn Elkhouri & Anne-Marie Byrne , Canterbury Bankstown Council
12:00 - 1:00pm	LUNCH	
1:00 - 2:00pm	SESSION 3 Community and Connection: The Secret Sauce to Making Festivals Stick SPEAKERS: Andy Lopez , Out There Productions Ben Schubert , Out There Productions	SESSION 4 Revenue by Design: Engineering Ticket Demand SPEAKERS: Carol McCracken , Caravan and Camping WA Wendy Lacey , TLC Events Geoff Baker & David George , Oztix
2:10 - 2:45pm	SESSIONS INTRODUCTION - AFTERNOON A 15 minute introduction from each speaker to the afternoon sessions. SPEAKERS: ● Stephanie Cassimatis, Pink Caviar Events ● Nicole Walker, Lightning Bolt Consulting	
2:45 - 3:15pm	AFTERNOON TEA AND COFFEE BREAK	
3:15 - 4:15pm	SESSION 5 From Event Delivery to Event Leadership SPEAKER: Stephanie Cassimatis , Pink Caviar Events	SESSION 6 Operational Decision or Client Authority? Managing Competing Priorities When Clients Make Uninformed Event Decisions SPEAKER: Nicole Walker , Lightning Bolt Consulting
4:20 - 5:30pm	PLENARY: Designing Events That Matter – From bold Ideas to Lasting Impact SPEAKER: David Yakas , Wrapped Creations	
6:00 - 8:00pm	Beach House BBQ at Aanuka	

WEDNESDAY 21 OCTOBER 2026

8:30 - 9:00am	ARRIVAL TEA AND COFFEE	
9:00 - 10:30am	SESSIONS INTRODUCTION Each speaker will have 15 minutes to give delegates an introduction to their topic and from there, delegates can pick which session they wish to attend. There will be an opportunity for Q&A after all presentations. SPEAKERS: ● Hannah Pike, We Are Gather ● Simon Irwin, Beef Australia Limited ● Prue Simson, Australian Equine and Livestock Events Centre ● Amy Byars & Alexandra Buzila, Illuminate Adelaide ● Linda Tillman & Cathy Treasure, Australian Centre for Regional Events	
10:30 - 11:00am	MORNING TEA AND COFFEE BREAK	
11:00am - 12:00pm	SESSION 7 Small but Mighty: How a Boutique Agency can deliver Australia's Biggest Events SPEAKER: Hannah Pike , We Are Gather	WORKSHOP Partnerships that Perform – How to attract Sponsors and build Smarter Event Collaborations SPEAKERS: Linda Tillman , Australian Centre for Regional Events Cathy Treasure , Australian Centre for Regional Events
12:00 - 1:00pm	LUNCH	
1:00 - 2:00pm	SESSION 8 The Rise of Agri-Tourism: Beef Australia's \$100M Success Story SPEAKER: ● Simon Irwin, Beef Australia Limited	WORKSHOP (Continued) Partnerships that Perform – How to attract Sponsors and build Smarter Event Collaborations
2:10 - 3:10pm	SESSION 9 Leading Through Chaos SPEAKER: Prue Simson , Australian Equine and Livestock Events Centre	SESSION 10 Delivering Accessible Event Experiences: An Illuminate Adelaide Case Study SPEAKERS: Amy Byars , Illuminate Adelaide Alexandra Buzila , Illuminate Adelaide
3:10 - 3:45pm	AFTERNOON TEA AND COFFEE BREAK	
3:45 - 5:00pm	CLOSING PLENARY: To Be Announced SPEAKERS: ● To be Announced CLOSING REMARKS	
6:15 - 10:30pm	AUSTRALIAN EVENT AWARDS CEREMONY	

TUESDAY 20 OCTOBER 2026

TIME	SESSION
8:30am - 9:00am	ARRIVAL TEA AND COFFEE
9:00am - 10:20am	Welcome To The Australian Event Symposium: Managing Director, Ian Steigrad SESSIONS INTRODUCTION - MORNING This Introduction Session will give delegates insight into the upcoming sessions of the morning. Hear from the speakers about what their session will be addressing, what you'll gain and be introduced to the speakers delivering the session. Each speaker will have 15 minutes to give delegates an introduction to their topic and from there, delegates can pick which session they wish to attend. Q&A will be available after all presentations. SPEAKERS: ● Tolita Dukes, 8 Seconds ● Cindy Evelyn Elkhouri & Anne-Marie Byrne, Canterbury Bankstown Council ● Andy Lopez & Ben Schubert, Out There Productions ● Carol McCracken, Caravan and Camping WA, Wendy Lacey, TLC Events, Geoff Baker & David George, Oztix
10:20am - 11:00am	MORNING TEA AND COFFEE BREAK
11:00am - 12:00pm	SESSION I Clone Yourself – AI for Marketers: Build Your Digital Double Someone with half your experience is about to outpace you. Not because they're better – because they've learned to use AI to move faster, think clearer, and execute at scale. While they're copying the output, you can clone the thinking. This session shows you how to build your own AI 'clone' – one that sounds like you, thinks like you, protects your brand voice, and creates like you. Even when you're not at your desk. You've earned your expertise. The instincts. the reputation. The way you read a room, a client, a brief. That took years. But here's what's already happening: ● Someone less experience is using AI to look more polished, move faster, and win the work you should be winning. ● Most businesses have AI running through their teams right now – inconsistently, unstrategically, with no brand protection. Copilot. ChatGPT. Gemini. these tools are already in the building. The question is whether they're working for your brand, or against it. This isn't about keeping up – Your expertise, multiplied. SPEAKER: ● Tolita Dukes, 8 Seconds

TIME	SESSION
11:00am - 12:00pm	SESSION 2 Community Event Science: Understanding the DNA Behind Successful Community Events From small local activations to major signature festivals, successful community events are built on the same underlying principles of human behaviour, movement, identity, connection and place. This presentation introduces the concept of “Community Event Science” — a practical framework exploring how understanding community identity and event ecosystems can transform the way events are planned, delivered and experienced. Using Canterbury-Bankstown Council's award-winning signature event Lakemba Nights During Ramadan as a real-world case study, this session will explore how culturally significant community events operate as complex social systems that require more than logistics and programming alone. Through operational insights, behavioural observations and community-centred design principles, attendees will gain a deeper understanding of how events can strengthen belonging, social cohesion and place identity while successfully managing large-scale operational complexity. SPEAKERS: ● Cindy Evelyn Elkhouri, Canterbury Bankstown Council ● Anne-Marie Byrne, Canterbury Bankstown Council
12:00pm - 1:00pm	LUNCH
1:00pm - 2:00pm	SESSION 3 Community and Connection: The Secret Sauce to Making Festivals Stick The Summernats Car Festival has been an Australian institution for nearly 40 years. It is now the flagship event of a series of linked festivals around Australia and has recently expanded to the USA and New Zealand. Attendance continues to grow year on year, bucking a trend that has seen other massed attendance events struggle and fail in recent years. The enduring and continued growth is a result of its real and genuine connection to the community it serves. SPEAKERS: ● Andy Lopez, Out There Productions ● Ben Schubert, Out There Productions
	SESSION 4 Revenue by Design: Engineering Ticket Demand A practical session led by Oztix, Australia's largest independent ticketing company, alongside Australia's most experienced and respected event producers, exploring how to engineer ticket demand through consumer behaviour, data, audience growth and benchmarking for success. SPEAKERS: ● Carol McCracken, Caravan and Camping WA ● Wendy Lacey, TLC Events ● Geoff Baker, Oztix ● David George, Oztix

TIME	SESSION
2:10pm - 2:45pm	SESSIONS INTRODUCTION - AFTERNOON This Introduction Session will give delegates insight into the upcoming sessions of the afternoon. Hear from the speakers about what their session will be addressing, what you'll gain and be introduced to the speakers delivering the session. Each speaker will have 15 minutes to give delegates an introduction to their topic and from there, delegates can pick which session they wish to attend. Q&A will be available after all presentations. SPEAKERS: ● Stephanie Cassimatis, Pink Caviar Events ● Nicole Walker, Lightning Bolt Consulting
2:45pm - 3:15pm	AFTERNOON TEA BREAK
3:15pm - 4:15pm	SESSION 5 From Event Delivery to Event Leadership Great events do not rely on logistics alone. As the industry grows more complex, the most valuable event professionals are those who can move beyond task management and into confident leadership. In this session, Stephanie Cassimatis explores the shift from delivering event components to leading outcomes – through stronger decision making, stakeholder confidence, team direction and strategic thinking. Designed for professionals working in high-pressure environments, this presentation unpacks what is really takes to lead events and expectations with greater authority, clarity and commercial awareness. SPEAKER: ● Stephanie Cassimatis, Pink Caviar Events SESSION 6 Operational Decision or Client Authority? Managing Competing Priorities When Clients Make Uninformed Event Decisions "The most successful event professionals don't win every argument. They build enough trust that clients make better decisions." Every event professional has experienced it: a client making a decision that conflicts with operational realities, budget constraints, attendee experience, risk management or best practice advice. While clients ultimately own the event, event professionals are often left navigating the consequences of decisions made without a full understanding of the operational implications. This session explores the delicate balance between respecting client authority and exercising professional responsibility. Drawing on real-world examples from the business events industry, we will examine how event professionals can influence outcomes, communicate risk effectively, build trust-based partnerships and maintain professional integrity when faced with difficult client decisions. Attendees will gain practical strategies for managing competing priorities, handling challenging conversations and positioning themselves as trusted advisors rather than order-takers. The session will challenge participants to consider where the line sits between client choice and professional duty, and how to create stronger decision-making frameworks that ultimately lead to more successful events. SPEAKER: ● Nicole Walker, Lightning Bolt Consulting

TIME	SESSION
4:20pm - 5:30pm	PLENARY Designing Events That Matter – From bold Ideas to Lasting Impact In an industry known for flawless execution, this powerful session challenges a critical question: what do our events actually change? Moving beyond logistics, aesthetics, and “running a great show,” this presentation reframes events as strategic tools for influence, alignment, and lasting impact. Through real-world examples and honest reflections, the session explores how to shift from simply delivering events to intentionally designing outcomes. Attendees will be guided through a practical framework centred on clarity, connection, creativity, and conversion. David carefully ensures every event has purpose, resonates emotionally, and drives meaningful results, and wants to share this with you. The presentation also highlights the importance of cultural context, human experience, and energy design, demonstrating how inclusive, thoughtful approaches deepen engagement and extend impact beyond the room. It challenges common industry habits, like prioritising theme over purpose, and replaces them with sharper, more strategic thinking. Delegates will leave with a renewed perspective on their role as event designers, not just organisers, along with actionable questions and tools to elevate their next project. More than inspiration, David’s session equips attendees to create events that influence decisions, shift behaviour, and leave a lasting legacy. SPEAKER: ● David Yakas, Wrapped Creations
5:30pm - 6:00pm	DELEGATE TIME TO CHANGE FOR DINNER
6:00pm - 8:00pm	BEACH HOUSE BBQ AT AANUKA After a day of boosting your skills, join us for a relaxed Beach House BBQ Dinner on the deck overlooking beautiful Diggers Beach. Dress code: Think tropical - florals, bright colours and feel-good vibes encouraged. Includes: • BBQ buffet dinner • Complimentary house drinks from 6:00pm – 7:00pm • Bar available for additional purchases at delegates’ expense • Entertainment
8:00pm	END OF DAY

WEDNESDAY 21 OCTOBER 2026

TIME	SESSION
8:30am - 9:00am	ARRIVAL TEA AND COFFEE
9:00am - 10:130am	SESSIONS INTRODUCTION This Introduction Session will give delegates insight into the upcoming sessions of the morning. Hear from the speakers about what their session will be addressing, what you'll gain and be introduced to the speakers delivering the session. Each speaker will have 15 minutes to give delegates an introduction to their topic and from there, delegates can pick which session they wish to attend. Q&A will be available after all presentations. SPEAKERS: ● Hannah Pike, We Are Gather ● Simon Irwin, Beef Australia Limited ● Prue Simson, Australian Equine and Livestock Events Centre ● Amy Byars & Alexandra Buzila, Illuminate Adelaide ● Linda Tillman & Cathy Treasure, Australian Centre for Regional Events
10:30am - 11:00am	MORNING TEA AND COFFEE BREAK
11:00am - 12:00pm	SESSION 7 Small but Mighty: How a Boutique Agency can deliver Australia's Biggest Events In an industry often dominated by large agencies with big teams and bigger budgets, We Are Gather has carved out a remarkable niche, delivering some of Australia's most celebrated food, wine and tourism events with a lean, passionate team. This session pulls back the curtain on what it really takes to compete at the highest level as a small agency, from landing government partnerships and major brand sponsors to building events that win national awards and keep coming back year after year. SPEAKER: ● Hannah Pike, We Are Gather
11:00am - 2:00pm <i>(Includes 1 hr lunch break)</i>	WORKSHOP Partnerships that Perform – How to attract Sponsors and build Smarter Event Collaborations This practical two-hour workshops will show event professionals how to secure right-fit sponsors who genuinely align with your event and keep them coming back year after year. Delegates will explore how to move beyond traditional sponsorship models to build aligned, long-term partnerships that expand reach, enhance the attendee experience, and generate measurable return on investment – creating partnerships that deliver genuine, lasting value for both the event and the sponsor. SPEAKERS: ● Linda Tillman, Australian Centre for Regional Events ● Cathy Treasure, Australian Centre for Regional Events

TIME	SESSION
12:00pm - 1:00pm	LUNCH
1:00pm - 2:00pm	SESSION 8 The Rise of Agri-Tourism: Beef Australia’s \$100M Success Story Beef Australia’s story began as a one-off event for Australia’s Bicentennial celebrations in 1988. Nearly four decades later, it has evolved into the premier beef industry event in the Southern Hemisphere — attracting more than 120,000 attendees, generating over \$110 million in direct economic impact for Central Queensland, and placing Rockhampton firmly on the global stage every three years. From producers and international trade delegations to industry leaders, innovators and consumers, Beef Australia has become far more than an agricultural event. It is a case study in regional ambition, destination impact and the power of building a global event outside a capital city. This session explores how a regional Queensland city became home to one of the world’s most significant agricultural events, the strategic decisions behind its long-term growth, and why staying deeply connected to industry — without being constrained by it — has been critical to its success. SPEAKER: ● Simon Irwin, Beef Australia Limited

TIME	SESSION
2:10pm - 3:10pm	SESSION 9 Leading Through Chaos In Leading Through Chaos, Prue Simson shares practical lessons from a career spent leading large-scale events and venues where no two days are ever the same. Drawing on her experience across major sporting, equestrian, and multi-stakeholder environments, she explores what it really takes to stay steady when pressure is high, priorities shift quickly, and the unexpected becomes the norm. This session is grounded in real-world leadership, not theory. Prue talks about how to make clear decisions under pressure, keep teams aligned in fast-moving situations, and maintain momentum when plans change. She also reflects on the importance of preparation, trust, communication, and adaptability when leading people through uncertainty. Rather than treating chaos as something to avoid, Prue reframes it as something leaders can learn to navigate with confidence. Delegates will come away with practical ideas they can apply immediately in their own roles, whether they are managing teams, projects, events, or broader organisational change. SPEAKER: ● Prue Simson, Australian Equine and Livestock Events Centre
	SESSION 10 Delivering Accessible Event Experiences: An Illuminate Adelaide Case Study What makes an event accessible? Awareness of accessibility and inclusivity within the event industry continues to evolve and grow, challenging outdated perspectives and reshaping how events are designed and delivered. This session explores the evolving and broad nature of accessibility through the lens of one of Australia's fastest-growing major events. Although only in its sixth year, Illuminate Adelaide has expanded its accessibility program exponentially since launching in 2021. By identifying barriers, targeting opportunities for improvement, and collaborating with disability-led organisations, Illuminate has prioritised more inclusive ways for mass audiences to participate in and engage with its program. Delegates will leave this session with insight into making meaningful progress toward more inclusive events, whether you are just starting out or building on existing accessibility initiatives. SPEAKER: ● Amy Byars, Illuminate Adelaide ● Alexandra Buzila, Illuminate Adelaide
3:10pm - 3:45pm	AFTERNOON TEA BREAK

TIME	SESSION
3:45pm - 5:00pm	CLOSING PLENARY TO BE ANNOUNCED SPEAKERS: ● To Be Announced
5:00pm - 6:00pm	DELEGATE TIME TO CHANGE FOR CEREMONY
6:15pm - 10:30pm	AUSTRALIAN EVENT AWARDS CEREMONY Join the Events Industry at Pacific Bay Resort as the National Winners of the 2026 Australian Event Awards are announced!