

CASE STUDY

International Alumina Quality Workshop (AQW 2008)	
TYPE OF EVENT: International Association Conference	DATE OF EVENT: 7-12 September 2008
EVENT DESTINATION: Darwin, Northern Territory, Australia	EVENT VENUE: Darwin Convention Centre
ORGANISER/HOST: Rio Tinto Alcan was the 2008 host organisation on behalf of Alumina Quality Workshop Inc. (AQW)	PCO/AGENCY: Event Planners Australia
ACTUAL ATTENDANCE: Projected attendance: 300 Actual attendance: 460 from 25 countries such as Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, India, Ireland, Jamaica, Japan, New Zealand, Norway, Korea, Russia, Singapore, Switzerland, The Netherlands, United Arab Emirates, USA and Vietnam.	

PROFILE/OBJECTIVE OF CONFERENCE:

Hosted by Alumina Quality Workshop (AQW) Inc, these triennial alumina quality workshops are the most prestigious and comprehensive education forums of their kind in the world.

The International Alumina Quality Workshop provides a valuable forum to discuss issues relevant to the production and use of smelter grade alumina and the sustainability of their industry.

As in past workshops, AQW 2008 sought to attract contributions on cost, quality, efficiency, value, safety, environmental, community interactions and other areas of interest.

The theme of the AQW 2008 workshop was “Alumina for the 21st Century” with topics covering exploration, mining and mine rehabilitation, refining, smelter impacts, residue management and rehabilitation, health and safety, as well as environmental and sustainability issues.

Topics covered during the workshop included:

- Health and safety
- Environment, social impact and sustainability
- Future directions for alumina quality
- Global alumina markets and trends
- Energy efficiency and GHG issues

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- Process improvements
- Advances in measurement and analysis
- Bayer process equipment
- Bauxite handling and beneficiation
- Management of liquor impurities
- Plant operation and maintenance
- Process modelling and design
- Scale control
- Advances in materials technology
- Global research and technology

The project management team at Event Planners Australia, led by Project Manager Susan Blake, provided high level strategic, logistical and planning support to the organising committee throughout the planning period and onsite at the workshop to ensure that workshop objectives were met and exceeded.

REASONS FOR DESTINATION/VENUE SELECTION:

The Northern Territory's capital city is the regional supply and logistics base for Australia's mining and energy industry and has become the destination of choice for influential resource industry events.

As the International Alumina Quality Workshop is the only one of its kind in Australia, it is pivotal to raising the profile of the alumina industry to the world.

Due to these factors, the location was a drawcard for international delegates with direct flights access from Asia and connections through all major cities in Australia.

Darwin was chosen not only for its close proximity to the Territory mine sites, but due to its tropical, relaxed environment which provided the perfect setting for all international and national delegates to network in a casual surroundings, totally removed from the hustle and bustle of major city centres that many of the delegates reside.

The field trip to the USD2billion expansion at the Rio Tinto Alcan Gove refinery, mine and rehabilitation areas in Nhulunbuy was an appealing activity a definite drawcard to international participants and an outstanding sell out and success.

The Darwin Convention Centre was selected as the venue due its ability to accommodate delegate numbers and the industry exhibition, as well as its proximity to the Territory mine sites.

One of the goals for AQW 2008 was to put together a memorable and innovative social program to create memorable Darwin experiences for the delegates.

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Two outdoor venues were chosen for the social events – Pee Wee's on the Point (cocktail function) and SKYCITY Darwin (gala dinner). Both venues were chosen for their beautiful location overlooking the Arafura Sea, with Pee Wee's at the Point also selected for its historical significance in Darwin.

LOCATION/VENUE/ACCOMMODATION INFRASTRUCTURE:

The event was held over six day duration.

AQW 2008 was one of the first international conventions to be held at the Darwin Convention Centre with its superb harbour location. The Centre is the jewel in the crown of the new Darwin Waterfront Precinct, a 25-hectare lifestyle precinct of parklands, hotels, apartments, alfresco restaurants and retail shopping.

The exhibition was located in two Halls of the Darwin Convention Centre and the floor plan was the ideal fit for this event.

The event attracted 44 exhibitors, a 40% increase on the previous meeting. The organiser had not planned for such an increase, but that is why the Darwin Convention Centre worked so well, as they had the flexibility to expand into other halls if required.

No exhibitors were from Darwin so all equipment had to be shipped either interstate or from overseas. There were exhibitors from Germany, China, Canada and Australia.

Some exhibiting companies were: Rio Tinto Alcan, BOKELA, FLSmidth, Sefar, Albany International, Hatch, Hydro, KMPT, Tyco Flow Control, Madison Filter, Bechtel, Precision Light and Air, Honeywell, Clear Edge Filtration and Alumina Australia to name a few.

The welcome reception and industry exhibition opening, coffee breaks and luncheons were all catered events held at the Darwin Convention Centre.

SOCIAL PROGRAMME/ACTIVITIES:

One of the highlights of the event was the field trip to the USD2billion expansion at the Rio Tinto Alcan Gove refinery, mine and rehabilitation areas in Nhulunbuy. It attracted 141 participants and was a definite drawcard to international members.

Taking advantage of Darwin's enviable tropical climate, conference attendees were enthralled with the locations chosen for the social events.

Pee Wee's on the Point was an outstanding success for the cocktail evening with its beachfront location. The delegates were captivated by the historic site of the restaurant as it was built on a site called Pee Wee Camp, which was established in 1911 when East Point was developed by Australia's Defence Forces to protect Port Darwin against naval attacks in the ensuing World Wars.

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The gala conference dinner held on the manicured lawns of SkyCity overlooking the stunning waters of the Arafura Sea.

A special touch at the gala dinner was the Territory Wildlife Park animal handlers brought in some animals from the park during the pre-dinner drinks. Animals included a juvenile crocodile, owl, fruit bat, python and lizard.

Participants took time-out after both conferences to explore the region's natural beauty with their families. Visiting the local attractions such as the Territory Wildlife Park, the Jumping Crocodile Cruise and travelled to the National Parks of Litchfield, Nitmiluk, Katherine George and the World Heritage listed, Kakadu.

EVENT TRIUMPHS:

One of the success stories was the fully subscribed technical tour with 141 participants to Gove presented a major logistical challenge regarding how to transport delegates to this remote area en masse.

Scheduled mid-event, it offered delegates the opportunity to visit the latest USD2 billion expansion at the Rio Tinto Alcan Gove refinery, mine and rehabilitation areas in Nhulunbuy, some 646 kilometres from Darwin.

Event Planners organised a group booking on the scheduled Qantas flight to Gove that day and due to demand they also coordinated two additional charter flights between Darwin and Gove. It was important to ensure that the two additional flights arrived and departed at the same time as the Qantas flight.

Transfers commenced at 4.30am, so delegates were thoroughly briefed in the lead-up to the event to ensure they were aware of the designated transfer departure times and enable the tour to run smoothly and on time.

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EVENT CHALLENGES:

Challenge

Darwin was predominately a leisure destination until the opening of the Darwin Convention Centre in June 2008, thus, with minimal exposure to business events.

Solution

The Northern Territory Convention Bureau (NTCB) and the Darwin Convention Centre worked in close partnership with the Conference Organisers to ensure the smooth running of each and every aspect of the event.

The NTCB conducted extensive training workshops to educate all businesses in Darwin and surrounds on the importance of this lucrative market segment and the specific demands of conference organisers and their delegates.

Challenge

During AQW, there was also the International Association of Women Police with 540 delegates and in the same venue concurrently.

Solution

The Centre had marked designated areas for each of the conventions to ensure that delegates to each convention knew where their respective sessions were. Acoustics in the Main auditorium were superb!

The Darwin Convention Centre is led General Manager, Ms Malu Barrios, a seasoned convention and event industry professional, whose wealth of 'hands-on' operational experience made such a difference to the success of the opening events.

From the client feedback, Darwin is well on the way to achieving their goal as a capable convention destination.

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QUOTES/FEEDBACK:

"We were delighted attendance was above projections and exceeded sponsorship budgets, both in terms of numbers and revenue.

"Many delegates remarked that Darwin had all the services and facilities of a major city but in a relaxed tropical environment. The city has its own special character with the added bonus of being so close to Asia for international participants and provided a relaxed tropical atmosphere to encourage stronger networking opportunities.

"The staff at the Darwin Convention Centre have the right attitude and make everyone feel so welcome. The catering was top class, as good as any conference I can remember attending. Many delegates remarked on the quality of the food."

Steve Healy

**AQW Workshop Chair and General Manager,
Rio Tinto Research and Development, Bauxite and Alumina**

"Darwin was an ideal choice of location for the AQW as it provided a gateway to South East Asia and a unique experience for delegates who had a genuine interest in the city.

"From a project management perspective, Darwin offered the right mix of venue, facilities and extra-curricular attractions for outdoor evening functions, natural and man-made attractions and local culture.

"The Northern Territory provided a desirable experience and 'retreat' from the norm which overcame any initial perceptions of the remoteness of the location for conference delegates who were considering attending."

**Susan Blake, Project Manager – Events
Event Planners Australia**

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