



A United Business Events Industry Association

The future of business events starts here

Commissioned by AACB, ACCG & EEAA December 2022

Australian Convention
Centres Group



Association of Australian
Convention Bureaux



EXHIBITION & EVENT
ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALASIA

introduction

The directive from the Business Events community and the members of current organisations is clear: we need a well-resourced consolidated association to be the voice of the industry.

The industry was gravely impacted by the COVID pandemic, and the disparate voices of our industry at the start of the pandemic prevented our effectiveness at the policy table to strongly argue our case. Whilst the industry came behind the Business Events Council of Australia (BECA) to provide a unified voice that helped raise awareness of the industry's plight, BECA does not have the resources to meet the long term needs of the industry. The highest priority identified at two industry workshops co-convened by Tourism Australia and BECA was the call for the establishment of a sustainable organisation to represent the needs of the industry to state and federal governments.

The business events industry of Australia is calling for one body to unify the sector, and provide dynamic networking, education, conferences, events, advocacy and programs to enhance and advance the work we do.

The consultation revealed the industry wants one body to:

- 1.** Educate and develop professionalism throughout the industry via unified and commercially viable conferences, events, awards, training and education programs
- 2.** Support key national issues such as workforce challenges, WHS, sustainability and leadership development
- 3.** Build a strong, mutually beneficial national community of event professionals that attracts others
- 4.** Represent the sector to state and federal governments
- 5.** Commission research to build strong advocacy, policy and economic positions
- 6.** Raise awareness and understanding of the sector, its impacts and importance
- 7.** Directly feed the state and territory-based challenges and solutions into the national conversation

This document is intended to showcase the process to date, inform relevant stakeholders of the issues that have been considered and to describe the new and exciting future for the business events industry.

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The business events industry snapshot

Prior to the pandemic, the Business Events Industry of Australia generated \$36 billion in direct economic benefit and directly employed an estimated 229,000 people across Australia .

43.7
million
people attended
a business event
IN FY19

\$11.1 billion wages
for direct employees of the industry

17.2 *direct industry*
value added to the
billion ECONOMY

484,000
business
EVENTS
TOOK PLACE
IN FY19

The industry includes and values the tens of thousands of individual businesses across Australia ranging from 'mum & dad' small businesses to multinationals covering everything from suppliers, organisers, venue operators, destinations, and event owners.



The journey to now

Our industry's size and importance necessitates a strong and robust association that undertakes research, creates policy, trains its people, develops the industry and is a powerful voice to government.

Currently, business events is lacking impetus, and a united voice where it matters.

Over many years, when our business events representatives have consulted and talked with government, key stakeholders and policy makers, it has been made clear that they support the formation of a united group and would likely contribute funds for specific work programs.

Association of Australian Convention Bureaux (AACB), Australian Convention Centres Group (ACCG) and Exhibition & Event Association of Australasia (EEAA) have come together and agreed to deliver the new consolidated peak body as they know and understand the benefits of a united voice and strong presence and the many opportunities that could be created with a new entity. The boards of these groups feel that the industry would be substantially better off united and are willing to do the work to make it happen.

Don't we have the Business Events Council of Australia?

Whilst the Business Events Council of Australia (BECA), is the peak body for Business Events in Australia, it does not have the resources to deliver the core functions. The BECA structure and model has no dedicated staff, meaningful funding or resources.

In consultation with industry, the BECA board has determined that the need for a well-resourced and highly influential association is now paramount. This is especially the case given the COVID impact and the need for rapid recovery.

The BECA board, through a dedicated Project Development Group (PDG), has developed a model for the creation of a new association to become the true voice of Business Events in Australia.

consultation with industry

Most associations face the challenges of managing the commercial viability of their events, attracting quality talent and sponsorship, advocating for policy and engaging community.

With a crossover of members, the business events associations are all engaging with similar people and organisations. This duplication serves no purpose to individual members, and there have been many members from all industry associations who have been calling for an amalgamation. Multiple membership fees are seen as cost-prohibitive and non-viable investments in time and resources.

For many years, leading organisations in our industry have been working behind the scenes to explore the feasibility of amalgamating to provide enhanced, and higher quality services for all members.

The most recent consultation was commissioned by BECA in 2021 and included interviews with 40 industry representatives and a survey of the industry covering:

1. Meetings
2. Incentives
3. Conventions
4. Exhibitions
5. Tourism
6. Other relevant stakeholders and influencers

As the new organisation must represent the needs of all organisations involved in Business Events, small and large, the survey aimed to collect and collate the interests of organisations of all sizes in the industry.

The outcomes included:

84%

of respondents expressed strong support for the proposal to establish a new entity to represent the needs of the Business Events Sector.

Only 1%

opposed.

14%

said 'maybe'.

93%

of respondents agreed that advocating to State Government on issues of importance to Business events must be a key focus.

90%

agreed on the importance of that advocacy at a Federal level.

80%

had an overall interest in having input into the national advocacy and policy agenda

Comments included:

*“Current arrangements not acceptable in **future**. Will reconsider involvement and financial commitments if there is no **major** reform”*

*“Need to remove **duplication** and costs. One set of events, conferences, awards, membership, data, training etc.”*

*“There has been a sharp decline in revenue and **loss of talent**. This will take time to rebuild. Best done in the **interest** of the events industry, not a piecemeal approach”*

*“Needs to be a true **national** body with strong state divisions/branches”*

a vision for the future

Here is a draft mission, purpose, vision and values for the new organisation.

These will be further discussed and developed as the organisation evolves.

Mission

To promote and to provide advocacy, research, industry development and networking for the business events industry to enable it to grow and drive significant economic benefits for its members and the community.

Purpose

To be the leading industry association for business events in Australia

Vision

To grow the size, scale and influence of the business events industry in Australia

Values

Sustainability, Service, Innovation, Leadership, Integrity

an approach to shape the future

There are many decisions still to be made, however it is clear from consultation with industry, that there are strong principles that need to be reflected in the new organisation for it to be credible, and commercially viable.

The main principle is representation. The new organisation needs to be truly representative and cover a wide cross section of participants from the business events ecosystem including meetings, incentives, conventions and exhibitions and must include businesses of all sizes from across Australia.

At this stage, it is envisaged that all parts of the business events ecosystem would be welcome to join in membership, including:

- Business Events Owners
- Professional Conference and Exhibition Organisers
- Business Events Venues (convention and exhibition centres, unique / function venues, universities, hotels and resorts etc)
- Business Events Suppliers (IT, AV, Caterers, Stand builders, Equipment Hire, speakers, entertainment, team building, freight etc)
- Travel and Accommodation
- Marketing and Communications (Signage, digital marketing etc)
- Other services such as insurance, accounting etc

The consultation revealed the other principles should include:

- Positioning: Being known as the voice of the industry
- Be the source of truth of industry size, capability etc
- Be staffed appropriately
- Have a focus on advocacy and research
- Be focused on membership and members' needs
- Provide operational efficiencies (compared to today)
- Provide an all of industry training program/s
- Support strong commercial revenue streams
- Have a strategy for long-term sustainability

It is also proposed to have key special interest groups (SIGs) to ensure that members can network and engage with others in their specific industry segment. SIGs could focus on communities such as a Venues or issues such as Sustainability.

The value proposition for members

It is envisaged that there would be six major functions of the new association to cover the key needs of organisations in the business events industry.



By being a member, one would benefit from:

Advocacy

Whilst the new organisation will have a national focus, it is essential that it work across both the Federal and State levels. The consultation revealed the need for State focussed Advocacy which is linked to the bid support funds and necessary infrastructure.

Research and Policy

The new association will play a key role in addressing the dearth of research and underpinning policy development related to business events. The first focus would be to demonstrate to government and key stakeholders the value of the industry and to monitor and enhance the performance of the industry.

Industry Development

This area will focus on the people in the industry as well as the need to implement a model that encourages continual improvement of the businesses and workforce.

Members services

This will include core functions of networking at both state and national levels, working to build community, and links with state and territory-based industries.

Promotion of Industry & Association

This will focus on talent acquisition, and the promotion of the industry to all stakeholders through PR campaigns.

Political traction

Meetings with key state and federal ministers and industry leaders have been held regarding the new entity, and they all have indicated a willingness to provide financial, political and stakeholder support. This is a major coup and shows the level of indicative support for the new entity from federal and state governments.

organisational structure

The business model proposed falls within good association practice and as such will have a diverse revenue generation strategy; whereby it is not reliant solely on membership fees to fund the organisation.

The revenue streams will include:

1. Membership fees



2. Grants and funding



3. Sponsorship and advertising



1. Product delivery such as events and programs

governance

A transitional board made up of the Project Development Group who have guided the process to now, will undertake the tasks of creating a new association and implementing the initial strategic plan. This will help ensure there is no lost corporate knowledge and to allow for a smooth transition to the new organisation from existing organisations.

There will be an independent chair appointed who will not be a representative of any of the merging associations.

Over 3 years all PDG members will stand down by rotation and their places taken by elected directors or new independent directors.

next steps

There are several steps still to be taken such as stakeholder engagement, legal and constitutional matters of the merging associations, which all need to be considered.

These include:

A new company and constitution is to be created, and registered as a company limited by guarantee

Some of the members of the BECA shareholders agree to wind up their own association and transfer their assets to the new entity

Whilst a new entity will not be dependent on government funding, seed and grant funding will be sought, as well as a membership drive and a commercial partnership acquisition program.

join us

This is an exciting moment in the **evolution of our industry**, and we thank you for your interest and support.

All the current membership benefits provided by AACB, ACCG and EEA will be available plus the advantages of an organisation with resources to address the big issues.

With your support, this new entity will be **a game-changer for the business events industry of Australia.**

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