

## **IWA World Water Congress & Exhibition**

**Brisbane Convention & Exhibition Centre (BCEC)**

**9 – 14 October, 2016**

### **Shaping our water future**

The World Water Congress & Exhibition saw more than 4,500 global experts converge on the Brisbane Convention & Exhibition Centre, Queensland, Australia, in October, to help shape a water future for the world that is both sustainable and equitable.

Listed by The World Economic Forum as the top global risk facing societies and economies over the next decade, water scarcity and drought affects four billion people, impairs cities, industry and the environment and formed the subject of four days of critical debate amongst the world's leading water professionals and thought leaders gathered in Brisbane.

Considered one of the world's largest meetings for water practitioners and researchers, the International Water Association's biennial World Congress & Exhibition returned to Australia after a 14 year absence, providing the opportunity to showcase the country's expertise in water management and world leading water infrastructure.

Brisbane won the right to host the 2016 event following a strong and comprehensive bid from a united 'Team Brisbane', described by the selection committee as an 'excellent and extremely strong proposal' which 'set new milestones for the event in terms of local support and programmatic quality.'

Brisbane Convention & Exhibition Centre works in close collaboration with Brisbane's research and scientific communities through its very successful Convention Advocates Partnership, a group which comprises some of Australia's leading scientists and academics with long-time Advocate, Emeritus Professor Paul Greenfield, President of the World Water Congress & Exhibition 2016.

Brisbane, which has built a worldwide reputation as a leader in science and technology and established Australia's first water grid proved the ideal host city for the event.

### **Event Profile**

The IWA World Water Congress & Exhibition is the global event for water professionals covering the full water cycle. Focusing on leading practice, innovation and solutions it connects attendees with the right people and the right solutions and has a track record of fostering new collaborations and providing platforms for change. Organised by the International Water Association this event brings together thought leaders, decision makers, leading researchers and business representatives from within and outside the water sector. The event allows water professionals to connect, explore and inspire solutions needed to meet water challenges faced by the world today.

The International Water Association (IWA) together with its organising partner, the Australian Water Association, devised a program dedicated to drought action and delivering a sustainable water future for the world's population.

The Congress program included six Leadership Forums, eight Plenary Sessions, 38 workshops, 86 Technical Sessions with 344 Presentations and over 500 Posters. Field trips included visits to Brisbane's water assets.

## **Prime Objective of the Event**

The Congress provides an environment for an exchange of ideas about innovation and best practices, leading science and emerging trends in the water sector and beyond. The World Water Congress & Exhibition bridges the space between science, practitioners and industry to share knowledge, collaborate and develop partnerships to deliver solutions that will shape our water future for decades to come.

The objective of the event is to inspire change within the community of professionals, to provide a global source of knowledge, experience and leadership for sustainable urban and basin-related water solutions.

In the words of Ger Bergkamp, Executive Director of the International Water Association, this was the right time to advocate for policies, launch tools and spread the awareness needed to move towards a water-wise world.

## **Event Highlights**

The sheer scale of the event delivered a number of highlights including a delegate networking event held at the much acclaimed Brisbane's Gallery of Modern Art which is located in the South Bank Cultural Precinct, home to the Convention Centre, as well as an inspiring opening ceremony and late decision by Prime Minister of Bhutan, Tshering Tobgay to attend and speak at the Congress.

The launch of a Career Development Hub in partnership with BCEC attracted attendances beyond expectations. This initiative allowed access to visiting experts and leading water professionals by tertiary students and graduates. Kirsten de Vette, IWA's Learning & Capacity Development Officer said these emerging leaders of the future were queuing to attend the group learning sessions.

## **Challenges**

The main challenges were maximising international delegate numbers and on the issue of international visas. These challenges were addressed as best as possible through increased marketing supported by funds from Tourism and Events Queensland (TEQ) and the Brisbane Accommodation and Bid Fund and by additional direct contact and requests from IWA staff to the International Event Coordinator Network (IECN) of the Australian Department of Immigration and Border Protection. In the end the event was attended by over 2,700 international participants.

## Legacies/Outcomes

The World Water Congress and Exhibition 2016 set into motion distinct call-to-actions that will accelerate progress towards a water-wise world, through collaboration, planning and hard action and included:

- Launch of the world's first drought action seen as a catalyst for increasing international cooperation and action
- Introduction of a manual on the Human Rights to Safe Drinking Water and Sanitation to assist service providers and regulators meet drinking, sanitation and wastewater management targets in the Sustainable Development Goals
- Global Report showing variations in water use around the world
- Launched 17 principles to create water-wise cities

## BCEC and Brisbane

Delegates and organisers described Brisbane Convention & Exhibition Centre as 'an excellent venue that met all their requirements with great, professional and supportive staff'.

Organisers and delegates were full of praise for both BCEC and Brisbane describing Brisbane as 'a great city and wonderful destination', with several delegates opting for a post congress visit to Queensland's North Stradbroke Island to learn about environmental and water management practices as well as the island's cultural significance to its traditional owners.

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