

Chipchase targets incentive travel for Melbourne

by Ian Jarrett

SANDRA Chipchase the recently appointed chief executive of the Melbourne Visitors and Convention Bureau (MVCB) has made incentive travel business a priority for the Bureau.

Chipchase believes that Melbourne and regional Victoria have destinations and products that are the equal of Australian icons such as the Great Barrier Reef, the Red Centre and Sydney.

Helping to push the Melbourne message will be Edwina San, who has joined MVCB in the new role of manager, international incentives.

MVCB will also open two Asian representative offices; one in Hong Kong and one in Singapore, to further develop its share of the Asian incentive market.

"We're developing unique incentive travel products aimed at the Asian market, as well as our traditional markets in the United States and Europe," Chipchase said.

"Melbourne has never been seen in the same league for incentive travel as some other destinations in Australia but that's about to change. We can offer a multitude of incentive experiences, all of which are within 60 to 90 minutes of central Melbourne.

"We have rainforest, bushlands, national parks, wineries, snowfields, day spas, historic villages and unique wildlife. Overall, the strength of product in regional Victoria gives us a distinct competitive advantage."

Chipchase held several senior management positions with the Australian Tourist Commission (now Tourism Australia) including two years in the former Melbourne head office and postings in Frankfurt, Chicago and New

York. She returned to Australia to join the Sydney Convention and Visitors Bureau as general manager, marketing.

In 1999 she was appointed the executive director of the Australia Pavilion project team at World EXPO 2000 in Hanover, Germany

Chipchase said she is excited by the Melbourne Convention Centre development, part of an urban renewal of Yarra River foreshore due to launch in early 2009. The development will include a 5000 seat, six-star energy rated convention centre; a five-star Hilton hotel, office and residential tower, and a riverfront promenade of retail shops and cafes.

The convention centre, which will be integrated with the existing Melbourne Exhibition Centre, will have a ball-room, 32 meeting rooms, a foyer for



- SANDRA CHIPCHASE -

11,000 guests and a gala seating system in the plenary hall to allow for flexible seating configurations.

"This development gives us Australia's most comprehensive convention facilities and puts us in a whole new league in terms of pitching for larger pieces of business," says Chipchase.

Chipchase has set herself some challenging targets: a 200 percent increase in the number of meetings in Melbourne and regional Victoria; and a 300 percent increase in international delegates.

South Africa starting to pull away from neighbours

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Africa still tends to get saddled in the minds of most foreign audiences with civil war from Sierra Leone, genocide from Rwanda, AIDS from Botswana, corruption from Nigeria, starvation from Burkina Faso, poverty from Ethiopia and despotism from Zimbabwe.

The NBI suggests that Brand South Africa may be starting to pull away from the gravitational pull of its continent.

"Its brand is in better shape than several countries in the NBI, and there seems little question that the other sub-Saharan states would fail to register on the NBI at all," said Anholt.

"In the near future, I hope to produce an African Nation Brands Index, calibrated to a more sensitive scale, which will help to show which African nations have the more robust and powerful brand images, and which ones must do more to position themselves fairly and positively on the global marketplace for tourism, foreign investment, exports and cultural relations."

