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Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre Enhances Accessibility for Events

By Maddi Devoy (MCEC). May 16, 2024

In recognition of Global Accessibility Awareness Day, Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre (MCEC) is proud to announce new collaborations and initiatives to help event organisers deliver more accessible, inclusive and welcoming events, as part of the venue's Positive Impact Guide.

The Australian Disability Network IMPACT Conference held last week, highlighted MCEC's dedication to inclusivity, creating an inviting and engaging atmosphere for all attendees.

The event featured accessible technology, Auslan interpreters, sensory rooms and accommodations for assistance animals, ensuring a truly inclusive experience for all participants. The catering options included tray service as well as table service, with a wide range of menu selections available at every station. For presenters with mobility needs, ramps leading up to the stages equipped with handles on each side allowed easy access.

Travellers Aid, a recent addition to MCEC's Positive Impact Guide, operated a buggy service for attendees with mobility needs, ensuring everyone could easily travel to and from the conference without barriers.

Head of Advocacy, Impact and Reputation, Rohan Astley was pleased MCEC could help create a space where all attendees felt welcomed and valued.

> "We're proud to work closely with event organisers and collaborate with leading accessibility service providers like Travellers Aid to improve inclusivity and support delegates to meaningfully participate and engage in events at MCEC," he said.

> Travellers Aid CEO Elias Lebbos said, “Our partnership with MCEC reinforces a shared commitment to accessible and inclusive events in which everyone can participate. Travellers Aid look forward to this collaboration to better facilitate the practical needs of the 4.4 million people with disability within Australia, as well as our international visitors to Melbourne.”

MCEC is also collaborating with Travellers Aid at the upcoming Accessible and Inclusive Tourism Conference, hosted by the Victorian Tourism Industry Council in August, to provide a buggy service, motorised wheelchairs and personal care support for attendees.

In addition, this week MCEC is also hosting the International Society for Autism Research (INSAR) Annual Meeting secured by the Melbourne Convention Bureau. MCEC is fostering an accessible and inclusive environment for delegates to connect, especially for autistic people, with about 1 in 10 conference attendees identifying as autistic.

To reduce sensory overload, stage lighting for keynote speakers has been adjusted, meeting rooms have been furnished with all black chairs and hand dryers in the bathrooms have been switched off to minimise noise. There is enough room for attendees to stand and walk at the back of the rooms without disrupting the session. A low sensory space is available, offering a quiet and comfortable environment for attendees to take a break and relax. A designated networking space for autistic researchers is also provided, allowing for more comfortable and inclusive interactions.

MCEC team members also participated in an education workshop prior to the event to understand how they can best support autistic attendees and ensure a positive experience for all.

> “We’re thrilled to host the Australian Disability Network IMPACT Conference and INSAR at MCEC,and demonstrate our commitment to inclusivity as part of the events. Through our Positive Impact Guide, we aim to provide event organisers with tangible resources to deliver more accessible events, providing a welcoming environment for all attendees,” Rohan said.

MCEC continues to prioritise accessibility and inclusivity, providing an inviting and safe place to connect.