

# Sustainability. It is not only about the planet, IT IS ALSO ABOUT THE PEOPLE

FOR ALL THE TALK ABOUT SAVING THE PLANET IT IS DIFFICULT TO FIND UBIQUITOUS EXAMPLES OF CHANGING THE WAY IN WHICH MEETINGS ARE MANAGED TO COMPLY WITH SUSTAINABLE PRACTICE. IT IS SUCH AN EXCITING JOURNEY TO WORK WITH THOSE CLIENTS WHO SERIOUSLY WANT TO APPROACH THE PLANNING OF THEIR CONFERENCE TO EMBRACE A STRATEGY TO COVER OFF AS MANY ASPECTS OF SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT AS CAN REASONABLY BE INCORPORATED.



What made this particular conference worth singling out is that it had a track record of good but routine objectives and the Organising Committee undertook to make some radical changes to produce a sustainable event without lacking any of the shine it takes to achieve success.

The 5<sup>th</sup> Biennial Equity Conference was held at the Sydney Convention and Exhibition Centre on 22 and 23 August 2011. With a theme of *Schooling for Futures*, the conference broke away from conventional concepts and brought together delegates from schools,

regional and state offices, universities and community agencies in a positive learning environment. A much sought-after and highly respected speaker, Her Excellency, Professor Marie Bashir AC, CVO, The Governor of New South Wales provided the opening address. Keynote presentations were delivered by overseas speakers Professor Bob Lingard and Sir Ken Robinson. Delegates were able to select from eight invited speakers, 70 workshops and 17 exhibitions and trade displays.

With over 1,000 delegates attending the conference, there were plenty of opportunities to network and share ideas about 'what works' in improving student learning. When delegates travelled back to their school communities, it is expected *Schooling for Futures* will have made a strategic impact on student, teacher, school and community practice. With school planning underway, visitors to the website were encouraged to access the conference proceedings as a valuable resource in the development of their school plans.

## From the onset of the conference planning, the Organising Committee (OC) made a conscious effort to be 'green' and innovative

The conference major sponsor Adobe generously provided a Creative Suite 5.5 Master Collection. This was a major prize in a schools competition. Teachers and community members will be able to use Photoshop and Illustrator along with other software applications to engage students in their learning in new and creative ways.



### SUSTAINABILITY INITIATIVES

From the onset of the conference planning, the Organising Committee (OC) made a conscious effort to be 'green' and innovative, arinex ply limited, the IAPCO PCO appointed to the project, worked the OC to develop and implement the following some of which may appear normal to some readers but required a brave step forward to change past habits.

1. The majority of conference marketing was conducted electronically, through email marketing campaigns and the conference website, with a large array of downloadable information. This was a significant change from the previous conference, where most of the marketing collateral were hard-copy.
2. Rather than a large programme book, smaller 'z-card' pocket-sized programmes were used.
3. Smaller conference satchels were ordered to save material and storage space.
4. All abstracts provided to delegates on a USB stick, rather than via a hard-copy abstract book.
5. Onsite, water stations were set up throughout the venue; and in pre-conference communications, delegates were encouraged to bring their own water bottles for refills.
6. Lunches, after much negotiation to overcome occupational health and safety issues, were trays of healthy sandwiches and salads which were served in a hygienic way that overcame the waste of paper lunch boxes and cutlery, crockery and wastage.
7. No pads and pens were provided during the conference, and delegates were encouraged to bring their own - this resulted in much less wastage of paper and pens, and also provided attendees with the opportunity to reuse existing notepads.
8. Name badges were returned on the Christmas tree like structure that appealed to the delegates and inspired them to place their name badge with the rest.
9. On day two Sir Ken Robinson beamed in live from Los Angeles to discuss the importance of providing a creative and personalised education for all students. Presented via a Skype session, this reduced the need for international flights, was most effective and impacted positively on the budget as well as reducing the carbon footprint.
10. Without doubt the most impressive activity was a simulcast from schools throughout the state. Students were given a dance routine and other performance opportunities to learn and to video their performances at the same time as that performed centre stage at the convention centre. By doing this the conference incorporated hundreds more students in a simulcast via Youtube and engaged them actively in the conference without the loss of their time away from school, travel costs and carbon impost. It was 'awesome' and 'cool' and lifted the spirit of the whole conference to be able to share with so many fellow students, teachers and administrators across the state.

The outcome was that the 5<sup>th</sup> Biennial Equity Conference was a great example of a sustainable meeting that brought together the combined efforts of the conference committee, the PCO and all suppliers. A sustainable conference such as this is testament to a well-planned objective of intentionally reducing carbon footprints and wastage of resources such as water and paper. It is also a credit to those who came up with inclusive activities that used technology to involve a greater audience and expand the impact and value of the event on much greater numbers than those in the centre.



This article was provided by the International Association of Professional Congress Organisers, author Rostrin McLeod, DAM, Managing Director of arinex ply limited and Council Member of IAPCO. IAPCO represents today more than 115 professional organisers, meeting planners and managers of international and national congresses, conventions and special events from all countries. info@iapco.org [www.iapco.org](http://www.iapco.org)