

AUSSIE INVITATION

An innovative international marketing campaign reaped rewards both for Queensland and a score of enthusiastic business people, writes Margie T Logarta

For eight days in late August, 20 corporates, representing 11 countries and regions, enjoyed an eclectic range of travel incentive experiences offered in Queensland, behaving at times like a bunch of boisterous teenagers on a school outing rather than the busy, focused

executives they usually were in their different workplaces. But there was a serious reason behind the fun. The participants were finalists in Tourism Queensland's "Million Dollar Memo" campaign, promising the winner's company A\$1 million (US\$1,007,613) worth of incentive travel.

AN INNOVATIVE INCENTIVE

One of several moves designed by Tourism Queensland (TQ) to back up its five-year incentive growth plan, the Million Dollar Memo "is our way of sending out the biggest invitation to the world to good bosses who want to reward their staff, and get them to consider sending their people to Queensland," TQ chief executive Anthony Hayward told *Mix*.

He revealed that the incentive travel business was proving to be a lucrative area for his state, generating revenues of over A\$300 million (US\$320.5 million) annually. This figure, Hayward was confident, could zoom to A\$600 million (US\$641 million) in four to five years' time.

Aware of intense competition posed by other equally captivating destinations in Asia-Pacific, the TQ team has relied on creative concepts



to stoke the desire to visit this northeast Australian state, famous for abundant sunshine – it's nicknamed "the Sunshine State" – long stretches of beach and the breathtaking Great Barrier Reef.

WINNING WAYS

To become one of the 20 finalists, a total of 254 hopefuls from 69 industry sectors and 28 countries had to demonstrate

in a one-minute video why their companies were great places to work, and why Queensland would answer their search for a terrific event destination.

Finalist Shawn Godwin, owner-director of Base Architecture, which counts only 11 employees, promoted his home state by drawing and sketching its attractions on video and posting it on YouTube, as well as carrying out projector bombing of local buildings with Queensland images. The team of eventual winner Rusman Salem, vice-president of international business development for Indonesian automotive parts manufacturer ADR Group, bombarded customers in 100 countries via email and Facebook with requests to click on their plug for ADR and Queensland, and viewers were encouraged to "like" what they saw.

Jan Jarratt, the state's minister for tourism, small business and manufacturing, said: "These promotional activities have in effect been fantastic mini-

OPPOSITE PAGE

- 1 Navigating the rapids of Barron River
- 2 Helicopter transfer to Hyatt Coolum

THIS PAGE

- 3 With Harley Davidson escorts
- 4 Mini Surf Carnival, Gold Coast
- 5 Queensland tourism minister Jan Jarratt and winner Rusman Salem of ADR Group



campaigns for Queensland." She estimated that the message had reached an audience of about five million people, including the entrants' personal network, business partners, clients and suppliers, and generated over A\$12 million (US\$12.8 million) worth of global publicity for Queensland.

WORLD OF ADVENTURE

During the eight days spent in the state, the finalists were presented with a slew of experiences, from viewing modern art in Brisbane's Gallery of Modern Art to interacting with Australian wildlife icons such as kangaroos, koalas and dolphins; from surfing on the Gold Coast to concocting culinary specialties with the Sunshine Coast's top chefs; from dining under the

stars in the heart of the Daintree rainforest to whitewater rafting on the Barron River; and of course, snorkelling on the Great Barrier Reef. Along the way, the lucky contenders used iPads (lent to them for the occasion) to take photos, which they loaded onto various social media channels, as well as blogged as they moved from adventure to adventure.

Salem had so much fun he gave up competing for the top prize, saying: "Ultimately, if I didn't win, it didn't matter. I decided instead to relax and enjoy my time there and be the best guest of Queensland." Michelle Johnson, marketing assistant of Lend Lease (Australia), said the adrenaline rush in challenges such as the Iron Man tournament and whitewater rafting were memorable for her, and architect Shawn Godwin had his eyes opened to what his "backyard" had to offer, learning to appreciate the place he lived in even more.

The professionals agreed that the need to fulfill tasks during the programme, which would

reveal their sense of team spirit and innovation, boosted their performance. Said Salem: "I never knew how to pick wine for a fine dining experience, but I managed to with help from a teammate." Godwin, who admitted to not being a cook, did his part in producing a meal that bagged first prize, saying, "the teamwork and dynamics in the various groups was great, and can be applied to the workplace".

AND THE WINNER IS...

Salem was adjudged the overall winner at the poolside of the Temple Resort and Spa in Port Douglas, tropical North Queensland for his "strong sense of leadership, teamwork and adaptability". Early on, he made it clear that his company would visit Queensland regardless of whether they won the title, committing to sending 200 employees at the company's own expense. Fortune, however, smiled on this executive from Jakarta, allowing him to bring more colleagues, clients and partners to the Sunshine State. ■



FAST FACTS

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