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*Council for Australian University Tourism and
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conference*

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Council for Australian University Tourism and Hospitality Education (CAUTHE): 18th Annual Conference

11–14 February 2008, Gold Coast, Queensland, Australia

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expressed their views on Empowerment of personnel, Relationship marketing, Changing Trends in Hospitality, Issues & Challenges for food service managers, Tourist perception & Hospitality Giants venturing into mid segment markets.

Technical Session IV - focused on 'Hotel Operations & Management – Career issues & Future Projections & Allied areas.' KV Simon, Regional Vice President, American Hotel & Lodging Educational Institute, said that Indian institutes should be equipped to provide a finished product to the industry. "Why should we bestow trainee status for six months after spending four years in the institute?" he asked. He advised that hospitality education should be part of high school curriculum.

Speaking on the same subject, Shobhit Kalia, Head of Department – Accommodation, UEI Global, opined that there's a need for transformation in our thinking pattern in order to bridge the gap in HR. "The need of the hour is to complement education with short-term courses to equip people for a specific job. Industry needs multi-skilled frontline people with a global perspective and fascination for the job," he said. Abdul Bari Nayak, Bharati Gupta, Sonia Sharma, Subash KB, Rajiv Mishra, Avinash Chamoli, Anand Singh, Sandeep Lohani spoke about Houseboats, Emotional Intelligence among hospitality employees, Pilgrim's Expectations, Veda's & Hospitality, Role of Host Community & Changing face of retailing.

The deliberations of the conference resulted in valuable suggestions and recommendations. The valedictory function was presided by Sh. Kamal Ghansala – Chairman, Graphic Era Institute of Technology. Institute of Hotel Management & Catering Technology, Mullana, Ambala will host the next edition of the IHC in 2009.

Prof. S.C Bagri, President Indian Hospitality Congress, Director – CMTHS, HNB Garhwal University, Srinagar Garhwal Uttarakhand. E Mail – bagri_sc@hotmail.com

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ROBB MASON
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In 2006, Tourism Australia launched a provocative advertising campaign aimed at luring overseas tourists to Australia. It humorously highlighted Australia's preparedness to welcome tourists and ended with the challenging tag line, "So where the bloody hell are you?" Not everyone responded well to the casual

Australian use of profanity and the campaign was briefly curtailed in Britain because of it. The notoriety of the phrase was such, however, that CAUTHE was able to use it as the theme of their annual conference in 2008 under the amended guise of Tourism and Hospitality Research, Training and Practice: "Where the 'bloody hell' are we?" It was an appropriate theme given that inbound tourism has remained relatively static and the challenges to the pre-eminence of tourism as a viable industry in Australia are considerable.

The conference was held on the Gold Coast, an apposite venue choice due to its seminal importance as a tourist region based upon the conjunction of broad beaches, tropical weather and reputation for warm hospitality. The event was hosted by the Griffith University Business School's Department of Tourism, Leisure, Hotel and Sport Management. The conference attracted some 220 tourism and hospitality academics from places such as the UK, Scandinavia and continental Europe, Canada and the USA, Hong Kong, Malaysia and New Zealand as well as all states and mainland territories of Australia.

The CAUTHE conference, as it has been for a few years now, was also accompanied by a shorter workshop for PhD students of the Sustainable Tourism Cooperative Research Centre (STCRC). The STCRC is a federally funded initiative that reflects the importance of tourism to the national economy and encourages tourism research relevant to Australia's priorities in the area. Many of the STCRC students stayed on for the CAUTHE conference and contributed greatly to the working paper session and through the presentation of refereed papers. The role of the STCRC in stimulating research into tourism and hospitality was noted on a number of occasions and was credited, in part, with the increasing importance of academic tourism studies in Australia and the high relevance of CAUTHE.

The keynote address for the conference was delivered by Gayle Jennings of Griffith University. Dr Jennings used both a spoken address and a stimulating visual presentation to highlight, among other things, the dominance of western logic and thought within educational settings and the need for the greater encouragement of other forms of intelligence, particularly creativity. Her contention being that the latter was sorely needed if Australia was to maintain its place in the international economy.

The conference followed the format of using early plenary sessions each day as a means to present elements of the theme to the broad conference audience. These included the current position of relevance of tourism and hospitality research, perspectives on critical issues on tourism and hospitality education, and critical issues in a changing world. The latter, presented by Daniel Gschwind, CEO of the Queensland Tourism Council, was more tightly focused on the needs of the actual tourism and hospitality industry and began by emphasising its importance to the national accounts as a means of countermanding still prevalent opinion that suggests that tourism is ephemeral to economic performance. Tourism as a generator of income for Australia is second only to mining. Mr Gschwind also identified constraints such as the difficulty of obtaining tourism and hospitality staff in times of high employ-

ment, the need for training and the recognition and removal of some of the regulatory barriers that beset the industry.

The conference also allowed for special interest sessions. Two of these that attracted particular attention were related to climate change, and tourism and diminishing resources. The latter considered the relevance of peak oil and the question of sustainable water resources. While both of these discussions inevitably lead to 'gloom and doom' scenarios, they were duly counterbalanced by presentations that identified existing tourism and hospitality businesses that were responding to the changing conditions and incorporating more environmentally friendly practices. The panel also presented scenarios that did identify the possible trends of the future in tourism; less individual travel and more efficient group travel; less overseas airline travel and more local vacations, for instance. Other special interest groups were extremely diverse and took up discussions on, for example, the role of Generation Y in tourism, managing tourism and hospitality research, and the future direction of the STCRC. Critical studies was also discussed in such an environment, an occasion which prompted some attendees to suggest that such approaches should not be separate but indeed should be incorporated into all aspects of tourism and hospitality studies.

Throughout the three days the sessions were interwoven with opportunities to listen to and discuss refereed papers. These were usually done in blocks of three half-hour sessions, with a presenter talking for approximately 15 minutes, followed by responses and questions. Some 70 research papers were presented in this way. The structure of the conference allowed delegates to move between rooms as they so desired at half-hour intervals to attend the presentations to which they were particularly attracted. The presentations were usually organised into themes. As examples only the themes included eco-tourism and national parks, hospitality-hotels, tourism and economics, human resources, sport tourism, tourism development, tourism and experience and destinations. An active and involved poster session also enabled working papers to be described and discussed. A further 70 or so participants were offered the chance to present in this way.

But it was not all work. The Gold Coast International was a hospitable venue and the program offered many opportunities for delegates to chat and network in their own way. Swimming and sunbathing were also popular as the Pacific Ocean was but a couple of minutes walk away. The conference finished with an impressive dinner and dance that went on into the small hours. The next CAUTHE conference in February 2009 will take place in Fremantle, Western Australia, a change from its more recent locations on the eastern seaboard.

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