



LNG 18 A SYMPHONY OF SUCCESS

The 18th International Conference & Exhibition on Liquefied Natural Gas held in Perth in mid-April was given a standing ovation at its conclusion, with the experience of PCO Arinex coming to the fore.

There's a quote that says 90 per cent of what a conductor does comes in rehearsal – the vision, the structure, the architecture. As the PCO company that ran this conference last time it was in Perth (in 1998), Arinex was already well-equipped to manage this one.

And, from all accounts it proved it again this time, managing a raft of components in conjunction with multiple stakeholders including State and Federal Governments, the local organising committee, the international organising committee, the venue and hotels, delegates, and the management team behind the mega-exhibition which was part of the meeting, Exhibitions & Trade Fairs.

1456 EXHIBITION STAFF
1081 TRADE VISITORS
112 CUSTOM BUILT STANDS
11,500SQM EXHIBITION SPACE

This event, held at the Perth Convention & Exhibition Centre from April 12-15, had an estimated value to the local economy of in excess of \$50 million.

Because of Australia's leading global status in the sector – the world's second largest LNG exporter and tipped to become the largest LNG exporter by 2020 – LNG 18 was always going to attract media and political attention. And it did, with Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull attending the welcome reception, and the Premier of Western Australia, Colin Barnett, officially opening the conference.

Including delegates, contractors, suppliers and security staff, there were around 8500 people involved in LNG 18 over the four days. Those numbers created challenges for the venue and for Arinex, with some creative-thinking providing solutions that, like the conference, are tipped to leave some lasting legacies for the city of Perth.

One of the biggest was the challenge of fitting so many people into the Perth Convention & Exhibition Centre along with the need for concurrent meeting rooms, the stand-alone exhibition – which took the entire exhibition space and corridors - and dining options.

The solution was to build a temporary marquee structure over the top of the outdoor carpark that would be utilised as the lunch venue throughout the conference, while in another outdoor area a second marquee was erected and used for on-site registrations. To help make this happen the State Government committed \$2.5 million.

The result by Perth Expohire was nothing short of spectacular, with the main dining marquee looking incredible with live trees a part of the venue. An adjacent marquee with direct access

41 ARINEX STAFF
10 ETF STAFF
26 TRANSPORT STAFF
23 VOLUNTEERS
33 SECURITY STAFF



At the LGN 18 conference in Perth.

425 ABSTRACTS
6 PLENARIES
3 CONCURRENT STREAMS
80 SPEAKERS
50 ELECTRONIC POSTERS

from the centre was also constructed to cater for those with disabilities.

Despite the challenges, Arinex CEO, Ros McLeod, said following the event that it had been a resounding success.

"This is the number one business association meeting of the decade because it has the biggest economic impact on our country," she said.

"The space that they had at LNG17 in Houston was 40,000 square metres and of that they used close to 30,000 square metres. We had a fraction of the space here so we had to come up with some creative solutions."

Ms McLeod said the attendees at this event will be leaving the country with a fantastic impression of Australia.

"Australia is a leader in LNG and in the next decade we will be the largest producer of LNG in the world. This is not a widgets and gadgets meeting; it's a buyer and seller meeting. We have the three CEOs of three of the largest companies in the world here; we had the Prime Minister here. The legacy of this meeting is that they don't come together very often – and not to Australia in relation to the CEOs – so who knows what deals will come out of it."

Perth Convention Bureau CEO, Paul Beeson, was equally impressed with the event, and like Ms McLeod, sees legacies for the city at the event's conclusion.

"The legacy lies in the business events capability of Perth, the demonstration of Perth's ability to stage such a large, complex and commercially important event," he said.

"Quite obviously the benefits to the state are far more than in the spend on the exhibition and conference itself; the social, business, knowledge enrichment and heightened profile of the state is immeasurable.



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"The direct benefit to the Western Australian economy has been calculated at \$50 million dollars. All the sponsors of LNG 18 are to be congratulated, and mention must be made of the State Government, which contributed \$2.5 million to ensure the convention went ahead. These funds were mainly used to construct temporary infrastructure to expand the capacity of PCEC.

"This temporary expansion clearly illustrates that, into the future, if Perth is to remain competitive on the international conference sector stage, an expanded PCEC is essential."

Mr Beeson said the full utilisation of the centre also created a better delegate experience.

"I attended LNG 17 in Houston where only 75 per cent of the centre was utilised, and exhibition space and walkways were stretched to fill the enormous void. This left no feeling of intimacy, so essential for the relationship-building aspect of the exhibition and conference. It felt like we were in an airport hangar – with a corresponding atmosphere.

"Conversely, the scaled-down space of PCEC, utilised to perfection by Rodney Cox and his team at ETF, created a wonderfully intimate, more 'human' space, in which the superb quality exhibition stands could still be appreciated for their considerable size."

PCB led the original bid for this meeting back in 2008 and since then there has been criticism in some quarters that Perth didn't have sufficient exhibition space, not enough hotel rooms and was too distant. The criticisms have now been blown away.

Perth Convention Bureau Chairman, Ian Laurance, said "the LNG 18 convention and exhibition was a marvellous success and it clearly demonstrates that Perth has the capacity to hold more large-scale conventions in the future".



Let's get technical

After Arinex was appointed in early 2010 to bid for the event for Australia, the real work began.

Arinex had to do a lot of work in the technical area prior to the start of this meeting, with the company's general manager of IT, Daniel Branik, working closely with the PCEC to ensure the IT infrastructure was up to scratch.

"We started working with the venue 12 months ago. They were replacing some of their infrastructure and we wanted to make sure that their wireless network would cater to this conference. They replaced their wireless and the bandwidth was increased sevenfold from the original," he said.

"They were looking at replacing the wireless infrastructure in the future, however, they used this conference to fast-track that and make it happen.

"From a technology point of view we catered for 15,000 devices to be connected."

Arinex also created a conference app which included the conference program, allowed delegates to interact with one another, and pose questions to presenters in real time.

On-site registrations (1000 processed the day prior to the event), touch-screen electronic poster presentations, and online speaker preparation facilities were also created by Arinex.

Major undertakings were also performed to meet stringent security measures, with delegates having to provide photographs which were then made into ID badges that they were required to wear at all times to attend the conference and events.

"There was some talk about protestors and hence we prepared for the worst case scenario," Mr Branik said.

"The security badges were such that they could not be copied. As well as the photo and delegate name we also included a holographic image, and then added a barcode which the delegates could use for scanning with exhibitors."

The exhibition

Exhibitions & Trade Fairs (ETF) was responsible for the exhibition component of LNG18. It has done every exhibition for the meeting since LNG12 back in 1998, during which time the exhibition has grown 14-fold.

ETF's Rodney Cox said this one proved challenging because of the available space at the PCEC.

"The venue is small for the needs of the exhibition, but we've been very entrepreneurial and you'll see that we have booths in the foyers as well," he said on-site.



Opening ceremony of LNG 18 at the PCEC.



The mammoth LNG 18 exhibition.



Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull at the LNG 18 welcome function.



On-site registration at LNG 18.

"We have exclusive tenancy of the building and are allowed to use spaces that are normally public spaces. Normally when you step into this building you're in a public foyer, but you can't step into this building unless you are attending this event."

He said Perth had responded well to hosting such a high-profile event.

"Perth is a very small city in terms of events infrastructure and they would never have seen an event of this complex nature in their exhibition centre since it opened. They've seen events that have filled up the venue, but the standard of the booths are such high-quality.

"And the venue is very good from the delegate and exhibitor's point of view. It's well integrated, it's bright, it's a nice place to move around in - as you move you see where you need to go, it's hard to get lost. I think the delegate experience will be a fantastic outcome here."

Equally happy with the event was Perth Convention & Exhibition Centre general manager, Nigel Keen, who admitted there were challenges, but as reported, solutions were found.

The PCEC's experience in off-site catering worked in its favour when the decision was made to build temporary catering facilities over the car park to feed delegates.

"We simply looked at what we had to do as another external catering job, and it worked incredibly well," he said.

Off-site events

The Welcome Function was held at the State Reception Centre at Fraser's Restaurant and Function Centre which overlooks the Perth CBD, and was attended by Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull. The theme of 'Arid Australia' was a fitting start to the meeting with colourful Aussie characters welcoming guests. One special display was by a group of Indigenous women who were doing traditional dot paintings in front of guests. The Thursday night networking event, entitled Taste of WA, was held across the water to the Perth Convention & Exhibition Centre and included Asian elements in recognition of the next host city of LNG 19. **m**

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