

Darwin Convention 2009 Report

Multinet MBA and the Northern Territory MBC successfully worked together to present a very successful Convention. However, creating a successful Convention isn't just about the weekend!

The Convention Planning Committee (CPC) started work as soon as Convention 2008 in Western Australia finished. Deb and Tracey made a quick trip to Darwin on New Year's Day 2009 to have a look at the venues that Angela and the Northern Territory Convention Bureau had suggested. The Bureau was a great help and support to us not only over this weekend, but throughout the early stages of planning.

Next was the Twins Plus Festival. A great deal of work was done in a short period of time to ensure that the Convention could be officially launched at the Festival. The launch included a PowerPoint presentation put together by Peter and Tracey Young and a display put together by Debbie Chojnacki to entice delegates to make the trip to Darwin. All accommodation and registration forms were distributed and shortly thereafter delivered to those Clubs not in attendance.

Fund-Raising

To hold this convention in such a fabulous 5-star venue, a lot of background work was done to raise funds to ease the financial burden of those making the trip to the Northern Territory. This fund-raising venture involved copious documents, phone calls (especially to each other), forms, emails and man-hours from the Convention Planning Committee. Thanks to Esther Rosen for helping with the follow up phone calls and to Marion Gevers for proofreading the sponsorship documents.

We were able to secure more than \$4000.00 in sponsorships and grants and a further \$1400.00 in pre-convention raffle sales. A complete list of our sponsors can be found on Multinet's website (www.multinetmba.org).

Due to the successful fund-raising efforts we were able to add 'extras' for the delegates. These extras include the decorations for the Friday Night Frangipani Dinner – frangipani hair clips, balloons, candles, the gorgeous chair covers and the witchetty grub gift boxes all adding to the mood of the event. At each event, delegates were surprised with another gift including beaded crocodile key-rings, book marks and some locally produced scented soaps. Other 'fun' treats were the Roo Poo, Wombat Woops, Emu Eggs and Crocodile Poo which delegates were relieved to discover were actually yummy chocolate coated almonds or liquorice and black jelly beans).

With assistance from Joyce Keating and Jenny Noonan, Angela successfully applied for a grant from the NT Community Benefit Fund to assist with the speaker's costs including meals and accommodation. This grant enabled us to free-up more funds to pay for more items such as lanyards, canapés, meal up-grades and free drinks. We were also very excited to be able to provide each delegate with a USB that contained copies of all the registration papers, some speaker's presentations and all club reports. Thank you to Robyn Rosenstrauss and Joyce Keating for providing the flights for Tony Trimmingham and John Merrick.

Frangipani Friday Welcome Dinner

Kimberly Clark was the sole sponsor of our Frangipani Friday Welcome Dinner. We enjoyed canapés and pre-dinner drinks followed by a lovely buffet. Thank you to Donna Odegaard from the Radio Larrakia for the Welcome to Country. The AMBA Awards were presented by AMBA Life-Members Jennifer Noonan and Judy O'Rourke. Congratulations to all the night's recipients including Multinet for their award for *Service to the National Community* and to Debbie Chojnacki who received a Highly Commended for her *Dedication to multiple-birth families across Australia*. The night got a little hot thanks to a glitch in the air conditioning system but SKYCITY staff came to the rescue with fans and water mist sprays for each attendee.

Saturday – AMBA Business

AMBA Chairperson, Karen Willetts, took charge on the AMBA business day which ran very smoothly with no controversial issues and during the AGM a new board was successfully obtained. It is fantastic to see the club representatives and the National Committee working well for the greater multiple-birth community. The atmosphere was warm and friendly (not because of the air-conditioning – we had been up-graded to the grand ballroom) and once again, the food was plentiful and delicious.

Crocosaurus Cove – Saturday Night

Saturday night produced a few surprises at our Crocosaurus Cove function. There were crocodiles jumping up at the guests and a few inquisitive snakes were seen sliding down a top or two, not to mention a bit of crocodile feeding by some delegates. Although there were a few hiccups with the management's timing of the event there was much chatter and catching-up with new friends and old. Unfortunately the dancing just started a little late. A special mention to Phillip Bell who helped some attendees ease the tension of the day with a neck massage!

Guest Speakers - Sunday

As Masters of Ceremony, Joyce and Angela kept everyone on track and managed to keep both the days moving smoothly despite a few technical hiccups along the way (always the way when computers are involved). The local speakers, Leanne Bugg from School of the Air, Lisa McDonall on Children's Spinal Health along with Elizabeth Rutz and Marlene Liddle from the Strong Women, Strong Babies, Strong Culture program brought many interesting concepts and ideas to our attendee's attention. We were pleased to introduce Margo Irons from the Twinless-Twins organisation to the delegates. Margo gave us insight about the twin bond and the loss of her twin. Our interstate speakers, Tony Trimmingham and John Merrick, did an excellent presentation and provided realistic and thought-provoking information about bereavement, communication and drugs in our society including the one we mostly forget about, alcohol. I am sure delegates in attendance will provide you with some great reports from these speakers in the next few newsletters.

The Weekend

Overall, we had a total of 73 attendees with an average of 60 people at each dinner/session which we were very pleased with.

The following figures have been taken from the registrations showing the percentage of multiples in each age group.

Age group	0 – 3	4 – 7	8-11	12 - 18	19+
Percentage	20%	21%	15%	15%	29%

This table shows that representation at convention is not limited to parents of babies or younger children as 29% of delegates have children past high-school age. We are therefore pleased that the guest speakers covered a range of topics that should be relevant and of interest to parents of multiples across all age groups.

We are also delighted that 39% of registered delegates are members of Multinet either as their main or secondary club.

Deb did an amazing job coordinating with SKYCITY and the staff for the event management as well as the accommodation bookings which was always a little confusing with attendees changing rooms throughout the event! Tracey hopes you were able to enjoy the convention papers, advertising, name tags, menus, USB's, bookmarks and all paperwork that she created. She launched Multinet's website just so that all the information could be downloaded easily.

Angela was the sole contact from the Northern Territory club and therefore the only 'feet on the ground' to coordinate local speakers, deliveries, the Easter Raffle (selling over 342 tickets on her own – we are told that people now run when they see her coming!) and most things Darwin based.

After finishing a very full day of speakers on the Sunday with a savoury afternoon tea, many delegates took advantage of the proximity to Mindil Markets to watch the glorious sunset and to purchase a gift or two for those at home and to have a taste of the international cuisine. It had a great atmosphere and was a lot of fun. Of course then quite a few relaxed pool-side until it was time to catch flights. 22 of those lucky enough to stay until Monday booked onto the organised tour to Litchfield National Park and from all reports, had a great time (forgetting the broken foot that Marion took home as her souvenir!)

Many thanks to the delegates for the wonderful feedback we have received. We are very pleased to hear how much you enjoyed the Convention in Darwin. It truly was a unique experience.

Debbie Chojnacki, Angela Gahan and Tracey Young