

SHARING THE 'NITE' TOGETHER

Well, the inaugural NITE (Norfolk Island Tourism Exchange) is over, but the ideas and concepts discussed will resonate for much longer. Held from the 19th to 21st March the event allowed major tourism wholesalers (Australian and New Zealand), local sellers (business owners and operators) and media (overseas and Island) to meet, and see Norfolk launch its new brand and 2009 Tourism Awards.



Some of the media contingent at Dino's

One of the key things to come out of the briefings, talks and dinners was that the local tourism industry, which accounts for about 90% of Norfolk's overall economy, must attract more 'high yield' visitors in the future. 'High yield' tourists are discerning travellers who want quality in food, accommodation, products and holiday experiences, and are willing to pay more for their demands. It would be better for Norfolk's environment, and people, to attract higher-spending tourists - aiming for about 35,000 visitors annually – rather than encourage those seeking cheap, package trips.

As a child most of my family holidays were spent at Grandad's beach shack in Robe, South Australia. 'Shack' describes it perfectly; a small, tin shanty with a kero fridge, outdoor dunny (with resident Red back spiders), wood stove and no laundry or bathroom. I remember the cosiness, ice-creams, beach, surf, sun, fish and chips, old buildings and Norfolk pines lining Robe's historic foreshore, but I'm sure my parents' memories are not quite as idyllic.

Hot, crowded, sand-filled accommodation, no proper cooking or washing facilities and a heap of young children, too terrified to visit the toilet on their own, must have often made their stay far from relaxing. Of course, we had lots of good times, too, but there's no doubt that holidaying, and the tourist market in general, has undergone massive changes in the last 35 years. Travellers and holiday-makers grow ever more sophisticated and demanding, and why not? Our standard of living has improved to such a degree, with all its technological advances, that we definitely expect *more* when we go away.

That doesn't mean we don't enjoy the simple things, too. Good, hearty meals, fishing, swimming, physical activities, reading, enjoying nature, meeting and socialising with friendly people can *make* any holiday, but tourism operators need to constantly respond to their market's needs, and desires, to stay competitive. NITE was an attempt to begin expanding Norfolk's share of the younger holiday-maker's market; without losing loyal, older patrons. The need for change, from a united local industry, was emphasised again and again.



Mahesh and Jodie at the launch

Mahesh Enjeti's brand launch spelt out the problems facing Norfolk in attracting new visitors, but also highlighted its assets. The perception of the Island as 'a world apart' can be used to promote Norfolk as a unique, welcoming place where visitors can step into another way of life.

Mahesh and the local branding committee, headed by Jodie Williams, have tapped into a potent idea with the brand promise: *The world of Norfolk. Small World. No small wonder.* Norfolk can truly be a wondrous place; full of beauty, history and friendliness. In our constantly changing existence - the global village of the new millennium, with everything at our fingertips - people yearn for simpler places and a relaxed lifestyle.

As Mahesh suggested Norfolk is *no* ordinary island; its people and history are far from ordinary. It is quaint, and quirky, in the best possible way. *Wun World, One Norf'k* seems a particularly apt phrase to describe the appeal of such a destination.

(Jenny Jauczius)