

# Point of difference

With a stunning beach front position the Napier War Memorial Conference Centre is arguably New Zealand's most spectacular conference venue.

**editorial** roger moroney **pictures** lee warren



"Wow, look at this," were the words which drew a satisfied smile from Napier War Memorial Conference Centre manager Glenys Fraser. The glowing words of praise were from Leigh Harry - a man who knows a thing or two about such facilities through his CEO role of the Melbourne Convention Centre.

Mr Harry was a keynote speaker at a Conventions and Incentives New Zealand National Conference staged at the Napier War Memorial Conference Centre. He said the Marine Parade facility ticked all the right boxes. Glenys smiled again, and like all those who have experienced the very special feel to the centre since it opened in 1995, could only nod in agreement.

The seafront centre is one of the jewels in the country's conference and convention centre crown, but as Glenys pointed out, a lot of locals were not aware of just what they had in their community. Many of those locals belonged to companies, clubs and organisations that staged national, annual gatherings, but it often became a case of not seeing the wood for the trees. "We have the infrastructure right here to put on an event. Just call us, come and see us and we'll guide you through."

As Glenys is keen to explain, while the main metro centres like Auckland and Christchurch could take the bigger conferences, Napier had a uniqueness, a point of difference and much of that was in its ability to create a relaxing

warmth to proceedings. The view out into the wide blue Pacific is quite simply sensational, and it is but a few minutes walk to the city's CBD and its cafés, restaurants, bars and top-of-the-range shops.

#### Outdoor extension

Glenys said the venue could host up to 250 people, although that limited trade display space. Up to 180 people could be catered for alongside up to 15 trade displays.

But Hawke's Bay's clement climate meant displays could be staged outdoors under marquees in the neighbouring gardens - a popular selling point in themselves. "We are self-contained. We do the audio and visuals and we have contracted caterers. Just come and see us and we will do it all."

On the catering issue, Glenys proudly produced a letter from a recent conference attendee who wrote that she could not believe the effort the conference centre crew went to to accommodate everyone's often individual requests. "But that is the business we are in. The people business it is all about making them feel special."

It is an approach best summed up by a small notice on the wall of the office foyer.

It says simply - 'How did you exceed that customer's expectations?'

[www.venues.co.nz](http://www.venues.co.nz)

**"We do the audio and visuals and we have contracted caterers. Just come and see us and we will do it all."**

Glenys Fraser

LEFT TO RIGHT: A warm welcome awaits conference goers. State of the art conferencing. Inspiring views. Keeping the eternal flame burning in remembrance.

