



AUSTRALIAN HOTELS ASSOCIATION

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MEDIA RELEASE

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Australia's top hotels recognised by AHA

Sydney's iconic Coogee Bay Hotel and the refurbished Exchange Hotel Townsville have taken out the top honours at the Australian Hotels Association's National Awards for Excellence tonight (Sunday).

The awards for *Best Overall Hotel – Metropolitan* (Coogee Bay Hotel) and *Best Overall Hotel – Regional* (Exchange Hotel) are two of the industry's most sought-after awards, recognising excellence across a number of hotel operations including bar presentation and service, dining, live entertainment, gaming, retail and community service.

AHA National CEO Des Crowe paid tribute to the winners. "The Coogee Bay Hotel is an industry icon, and a worthy winner of this prestigious award. Offering outstanding facilities and a commendable dedication to its local community, the CBH is a great example of the central roles played by pubs in Australian society.

"Featuring live entertainment, an impressive bistro menu, world-class design and furnishings incorporating modern technology, function facilities, the Exchange Hotel caters to Townsville's wide demographic of patrons while the service from its attentive staff is first class."

One off the highlights of the evening was the emotional induction into the AHA's *Johnnie Walker Hall of Fame* of South Australian hotelier brothers Guy and Tony Matthews. In giving the induction speech, AHA National President Peter Hurley paid tribute to the Matthews family's seventy-year history of hotel ownership in South Australia, including many of the states iconic hotels.

"Guy and Tony Matthews were born into the hotel industry, and have a long history of industry leadership and innovation over seven decades and dozens of hotels. Tony and Guy have also assisted the AHA in various roles over many years, and have cemented their legacy through their children who are all active in the industry in their own right."

The AHA recognised the efforts of hotels to support their local communities with a special presentation of finalists in the *Outstanding Community Service & Achievement* award. The award was shared by Wisdom Café & Bar (NT) and the Flowerdale Hotel (Vic).

Mr Crowe also paid tributes to other winners, saying "the AHA National Awards are contested by the winners of awards from every state and territory, so there is tough competition in all categories. Sydney's Ivy Bar and Brisbane's Cloudland Bar were both multiple winners and together have set a new standard for design in the industry.

"The Walkers Arms Hotel in Adelaide has shown the benefits of an \$11.7 million rebuild after being devastated by fire in 2007, winning the awards for *Best Environmental Practice* and *Best Outdoor/Non-enclosed facility*."

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2011 NATIONAL
AIAA AWARDS FOR
EXCELLENCE

SUNDAY 21 AUGUST
FOUR SEASONS HOTEL
SYDNEY

Winners by State/Territory

ACT

Diamant Hotel Canberra

Best Marketed Hotel – Accommodation Division

Now reopened after being damaged by a recent fire, the Diamant Hotel Canberra promises to bounce back quickly thanks to the innovative promotional flair of its in-house marketing team. Lucrative partnerships with the nearby National Gallery of Australia, Australian National University and National Museum of Australia along with a modern style have helped this refurbished heritage hotel to quickly become a Canberra icon after opening in 2008.

John Savona, Hyatt Hotel Canberra

Best Front of House Employee

Courteous, well-presented and highly knowledgeable, John Savona is everything a hotel wants at the front of house and provides guests Canberra's leading five-star hotel with outstanding customer service.

NEW SOUTH WALES

Coogee Bay Hotel

Overall Hotel of the Year (Metropolitan)

Boasting seven bars, Sydney's biggest beer garden, budget to boutique accommodation, conference and event facilities overlooking beautiful Coogee beach, an eighteen-hundred person live entertainment venue, two retail liquor outlets and a brassiere, the multi-award winning Coogee Bay Hotel offers everything you'd expect to find in a great Australian pub. The hotel's owners have also shown great community spirit by donating more than \$200,000 in cash, in-kind donations and sponsorships to groups such as the Coogee Lions Club, Sydney Children's Hospital and Randwick Surf Rescue.

Eastwood Hotel

Best Gaming Venue – Metropolitan

The open plan design of the renovated Eastwood Hotel and its unique 'Dragon's Den' theming complement its responsible gaming materials and the availability of complimentary snacks and hot beverages.

Est, Establishment Hotel

Best Restaurant – Metropolitan

Consistently recognised amongst Sydney's finest dining venues, Est in the Establishment Hotel provides an overall experience to remember from the greeting in the guest foyer to advice on wine and cheese selection combined with outstanding food presentation.

Bilson's Restaurant, Radisson Blu Plaza Hotel Sydney

Best Restaurant – Accommodation Division

Bilson's, located in Sydney's Radisson Blu Plaza Hotel, has a long track record as one of the city's finest dining destinations with its famous French-style degustation menu.

Mike Enright, Ivy Bar

Bartender of the Year

With 20 years' experience in bartending and a keen interest in mixology, Mike Enright also boasts an impressive knowledge of bar products and the preferences of Ivy's diverse clientele. Mike's passion and commitment shine through in his exceptional service standards in one of Australia's leading venues, and he is also a regular contributor of columns to many leading industry and consumer publications.

Gary Johnson, Hilton Sydney & Greg Bookalil, Epping Hotel

Chef of the Year (Joint Winners)

Leading Hilton Sydney's team of 50 chefs across six kitchens, Gary Johnson prides himself on his pursuit of perfection in all aspects of the business. From demanding the freshest local produce to engaging with guests and meeting demanding KPIs, Greg is one of the Australian accommodation industry's finest executive chefs.

Passionate and creative, Greg Bookalil is a strong supporter of his kitchen team which has helped him to oversee the growing success of food operations across three hotels which together serve over three thousand meals per week.

Hilton Sydney

Outstanding Achievement in Training

Team members at the Hilton Sydney have access to the global Hilton University, while in-house training was delivered through 97 class-based training courses and 48 practical training sessions over the past year. Incoming Hilton Sydney staff undertake a three-month induction process providing skills in service and teamwork.

Camden Valley Inn

Best Pub-Style Accommodation

45 minutes southwest of Sydney, the 1930s Tudor-design Camden Valley Inn is set amidst 5 acres of award-winning gardens and features a country-style pub and sports bar, restaurant, hotel lodging with function facilities.

Ivy Bar

Best Entertainment Venue

The stunning Ivy Bar offers a range of entertainment options catering to a wide cross section of patrons, excellent bar staff and a top notch security team in one of the industry's most glamorous settings.

The Mill Hotel

Best Redeveloped Hotel

The Mill Hotel in Sydney's south west has undergone a complete redevelopment and transformed from a tired 1970s roadhouse to a state of the art modern hotel offering the full range of hotel facilities including four bars, gaming room, wagering facilities, outdoor entertainment area, 21 accommodation rooms, a drive through bottleshop with convenient pizza menu, bistro and outdoor beer gardens.

NORTHERN TERRITORY

Walkabout Lodge Nhulunbuy

Best Mid-Range Accommodation

Culturally sensitive to the local Yolgnu people, Walkabout Lodge offers a range of accommodation for visitors to Arnhem Land. The furnishings including swimming pool, restaurant, bar and function facilities accentuate the tropical surrounds and the business is being rewarded for its recent refurbishments.

Wisdom Café & Bar

Outstanding Community Service & Achievement

In its brief five-year history in Darwin's busy Mitchell Street, Wisdom Bar & Café has strived to support local community groups and charitable causes while engaging patrons through a variety of events and activities. Organisations benefitting from Wisdom's community spirit include the Blue Foundation, Camp Quality, the Queensland Flood Appeal, Pink Foundation, Darwin Children's ward and a host of local sporting groups.

Dee Mulligan – Shennanigans

Hotel Industry Rising Star

Born in Ireland and coming to Melbourne Australia, Dee travelled and worked her way up the East Coast of Australia. She finally arrived in Darwin to work at Shennanigans. She started as a Waitress in Sept 2008. In her words she 'instantly felt at home'...she progressed to a Floor Supervisor, then Duty Manager and finally General Manager in early 2011. She is well qualified to be a Manager having obtained an accounting degree back at home in Ireland.

Monsoons

Best Marketed Hotel

In late 2009 the ownership of Monsoons set out on a quest to broaden its customer base through more inviting branding, marketing and a venue culture change. Following extensive market research into Darwin's late night

market, Monsoons has been hugely successful in marketing its improved entertainment offerings through direct marketing, use of interactive technologies and public relations activity.

QUEENSLAND

Exchange Hotel Townsville

Overall Hotel of the Year (Regional)

Best Bar Presentation & Service (Regional)

With four themed bars representing the great exotic trade routes from across the globe, the Exchange Hotel Townsville sets a new standard for bar presentation and service in regional Australia. Featuring live entertainment, impressive bistro menu, world-class design and furnishings incorporating modern technology, function facilities, the hotel caters to Townsville's wide demographic of patrons. The hotel's attentive staff make visitors feel instantly welcome.

Cloudland Bar

Best Bar Presentation & Service (Metropolitan)

Best Redeveloped Hotel

Cloudland Bar's standout façade lighting display is only the tip of the iceberg for this impressive three-story redeveloped hotel in Brisbane's Fortitude Valley. Inside the hotel are separate bar rooms featuring a retractable roof, 14 tons of Chinese marble and 19,000 glass balls. The striking physical features are matched by the outstanding service standards of Cloudland's attentive and knowledgeable staff.

Pineapple Hotel

Best Sporting Entertainment Venue

The Pineapple Hotel's restyled Fifth-Quarter Sports Bar brings together the hotels PubTab, lounge bar and public bar areas within of Brisbane's oldest hotels. The hotel also puts its money where its mouth is, sponsoring a host of local football, cricket and golfing clubs.

Fitzy's on Church

Best Restaurant (Country)

Since completing a multi-million refurbishment in 2009, Fitzy's on Church has raised its game in the dining stakes through its improved 220-seat Fibber Magee Restaurant.

Holiday Inn Townsville

Best Redeveloped Hotel (Accommodation)

A seven million dollar top to bottom refurbishment of the Holiday Inn Townsville has already delivered significant return on investment through improved environmental sustainability and by creating a more attractive guest experience across all aspects of the hotel.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Guy and Tony Matthews

Inducted into the AHA Johnnie Walker Hall of Fame

Walkers Arms Hotel

Best Environmental Practice

Best Outdoor/Non-enclosed Facility

Winner of five awards at the recent AHA South Australia Awards night including Best Overall Hotel, the Walkers Arms has been triumphantly rebuilt after being destroyed by fire in 2007. The new building generates its own electricity and includes a 91,000 litre water tank which captures rain water on those occasions when it does rain in Adelaide for use in the surrounding gardens and in providing hotel grey water. The \$11.7 million rebuild includes a generous outdoor space licensed for 290 people and offering a comfortable and entertaining open-air facility within the venue catering for both smokers and non-smokers.

Cremorne Hotel

Best Bar Presentation & Service (Metropolitan)

The Cremorne Hotel, with its main bar, restaurant, sports bar, gaming and fabulous outdoor area has something for everyone, but its amazing staff and high service standards are what most impressed the AHA's judges.

The Highway

Best Retail Liquor Outlet

Featuring one of Australia's first drive-through bottleshops, The Highway's retail outlet offers a huge selection of boutique beers & wines, knowledgeable staff and long opening hours. An innovative loyalty program, a free delivery service and regular tasting sessions help keep The Highways retail customers coming back time and time again.

Port Lincoln Hotel

Best Tourism Initiative

The Port Lincoln Hotel has developed a tourism initiative to attract visitors to the Eyre Peninsula through the introduction of personalised itineraries and tourist information packages sent in response to accommodation enquiries.

TASMANIA

Saffire-Freycinet Resort

Best Overall Hotel (Accommodation)

Best Deluxe Accommodation

Featuring luxury suites with views of Great Oyster Bay and the Hazards Mountains, Saffire is one of Australia's most unique accommodation developments, and an icon of the Tasmanian tourism industry. The luxury extends beyond the hotel's boundaries, with guests able to relax at Saffire's own lounge at Hobart Airport while awaiting transfer.

Stillwater River Café

Best Stand-Alone Restaurant

On the banks of Launceston's Tamar River, Stillwater glows with the authentic warmth only an 1830s timber building can offer with a six-course evening degustation menu or casual breakfast, a corporate lunch or a coffee with friends.

VICTORIA

Flowerdale Hotel

Outstanding Community Service & Achievement

When the tiny town of Flowerdale was devastated by the 2009 Victorian bushfires which killed 13 people and destroyed 221 of the 350 homes in the area, the Flowerdale Hotel became the pillar of the community. Providing shelter and free meals, the hotel became the meeting place for the local community as it first regrouped, and then began the recovery effort with the arrival of reconstruction workers. A charity cricket match pitting the recovery workers against the locals raised more than \$20,000 towards the cause, and today the Flowerdale Hotel continues to support the redevelopment of its local community.

Best Gaming Venue (Country)

Olive Tree Hotel

The Olive Tree Hotel's clean and comfortable gaming room is serviced by friendly and courteous staff and offers excellent hotel facilities and a generous outdoor area with facilities for smokers and non-smokers.

Best Bistro (Country)

Lord of the Isles Tavern

Recently renovated, the modern bistro, alfresco area, separate function facilities, and comfortable bar make Geelong's Lord of the Isles Tavern one of Australia's great regional hotels. But the real standout in this category was the exceptional service and attention to detail provided by the venue staff, both on the floor and in the kitchen.

Best Suite/Apartment Hotel

Citadines on Bourke Melbourne

Citadines on Bourke Melbourne, in the heart of the city's CBD, offers access to major business and financial offices as well as many world-renowned restaurants, entertainment areas, shopping precincts and theatres.

Best Bistro (Metropolitan)

Malvern Hotel

The Malvern Hotel was built in 1853 and is the oldest hotel in its district. Owners Ken Price and Michael and Susan Burke took over the hotel in 2009 and have placed an emphasis on food operations.

Richelle Zealley – Grand Terminus Hotel Melbourne

Hotel Industry Rising Star

Richelle has worked in the hospitality sector nearly all her life. Starting work in her parents Motel in Echuca she has progressed from cleaning rooms to becoming a leading personality and businesswoman in the Victorian hospitality Industry. She has worked in Melbourne and in country Victoria and has solid Industry experience from country pubs to fine dining. Now managing the Grand Terminus Hotel in Bairnsdale for the last 4 years, she has also squeezed in time to complete 2 Diplomas of Hospitality and Tourism to go with her Communications Degree.

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Settlers Tavern

Best Entertainment Venue

With a longstanding reputation as a live music venue, Settlers Tavern in WA's Margaret River stages a remarkable 250 live shows per year ranging from local unplugged sessions to major international acts.

Eco Beach Wilderness Resort

Best Environmental Practice

Eco Beach is a multi award-winning resort comprising 25 luxury suites set amongst the pristine and untouched Kimberley an hour south of Broome. Accommodation provides guests with an unforgettable and unique wilderness experience whilst having minimal impact on the surrounding landscape.

Cable Beach Club Resort

Best Resort-Style Accommodation

Located on Broome's picturesque beachfront, Cable Beach Club Resort & Spa offers studios, bungalows, private villas and luxury suites as well as three restaurants and the indulgent Chahoya Spa and Salon. The excellent visitor activities ensure there is always plenty to do amongst the relaxing surrounds of Cable Beach.

Els Jennings – The Breakwater

Employee Excellence in Service

Helping a guest deal with planning authorities to organise a Harley Davidson motorcade across an overwater footbridge and into the venue for his wife's fiftieth birthday party shows how far Events Manager Els Jennings will go to ensure a great function at The Breakwater in Perth.

Esplanade Hotel Fremantle

Best Superior Accommodation

Heritage style meets modern facilities at the harbour side Esplanade Hotel Fremantle, which offers superb four-star accommodation and beautiful water and parkland views.

Carbon Sports Bar – Burswood Entertainment Centre

Best Sporting Entertainment Venue

Carbon Sports Bar in the Burswood Entertainment Complex features a 12 metre dedicated sports screen, and sixteen other television screens dedicated to sport.