

AN 'OUTSTANDING EXAMPLE' OF DFK

DFK International's President Roland Graf shares a personal account of his recent trip to Australia for this year's DFK ANZ conference.

After a 28-hour journey with 20 hours in the air, I arrived safely in Brisbane with my wife Viola and were picked up by Paul Fiumara and his wife Louise and later taken to his firm, DFK Hirn Newey, to meet the other partners, Paul Haupt and Gavin Johns, as well as managers and staff.

I had the chance to talk to many members of staff who have been employed by DFK Hirn Newey for a long time, but also to those just graduating from university. All were very interested in DFK International.

We then continued the journey to Noosa on the Sunshine Coast in Queensland, where the DFK ANZ Conference was about to get started. Paul, in his capacity as the DFK International Vice President of the Asia-Pacific Region, and myself were welcomed by the Board Members of the DFK ANZ National Group and enjoyed dinner together in a fine restaurant.

The following morning, Paul and I joined the National Group's Board meeting, chaired by Cheree Woolcock. We had a full agenda including a presentation from one of the local member firms and had some discussions about current topics. In the afternoon, Dario Gamba, in his capacity as the Regional Chair of the DFK International Tax Committee, had organised a tax meeting with several speakers. The seminar was attended by around 30 delegates and was well received. The DFK ANZ Marketing Group later came together to be updated on current and future projects. In the evening, the conference officially started with the welcome reception, and it was a great occasion for the National Group members and their accompanying partners to meet again.

The business programme on the second day was quite packed. After the morning sessions of the National Audit and IT Committees, I gave an update on DFK International. After my presentation which covered European topics including Brexit, Cheree and Melissa Healy gave a presentation on 'Women in Leadership', an initiative which was brought to life within DFK International around two years ago, and intends to promote women making it to the top of a firm, as well as encouraging them to be more mentored.

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A worldwide association of independent accounting firms and business advisors

Executive Office: Temple Chambers | Suite 120 | 3-7 Temple Chambers | London EC4Y 0DA
Tel No.: +44 20 7436 6722 | E-mail: exec@dfk.com | Website: www.dfk.com

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The delegates then had the opportunity to enjoy presentations by external speakers, covering themes like estate planning and equity funding. Later, Stephen Bushell, International Director of the ANZ Group, gave an update on the DFK International marketing initiatives. It was obvious that marketing is one of the major topics for the group as the member firms are all sharing the same marketing strategy. I got the impression that the DFK ANZ group appears almost to be one big firm rather than many individual firms which are still independent. Also, the number of participants – delegates and accompanying persons – was amazing as just a single firm within the group was missing, having been excused, and nearly all partners of the member firms were present. After a series of workshops, including one on audit led by Radlee Moller, the day closed with dinner at the Noosa Surf Club with a beautiful view out to sea.

The Superannuation Committee meeting and presentations from external speakers, covering topics such as team building, and a presentation of the Association of Chartered Accountants (ACCA), with whom DFK International is closely cooperating, got the next morning underway. The annual general meeting followed, giving an overview about the financials by Gavin Johns and necessary ballots to be taken, and the morning sessions were closed by Cheree. She did an outstanding job in organising the conference, with the help of Liz Binet, and leading the whole event, moderating and herself giving presentations.

In the afternoon, there were a diverse range of social activities to experience, all on the water next to Noosa on the Lake. That again gave plenty of opportunities to network, exchanging experiences and thoughts. After coming back from the excursions, everyone got ready for the gala dinner in the Noosa Resort. Rob Shelton, for his involvement with the National Group, and his firm DFK Everalls, as Firm of the Year, were honored as well as Liz Binet, who is stepping down from her role of ANZ Executive Officer which she has held for the past 16 years. Along with representatives of the Ronald McDonald House Charities, the group welcomed a young family who had benefited from the accommodation provided by the charity for over 150 days. The group took the opportunity to hand over a cheque to the charity, as a donation which they have been making for many years. The gala dinner featured a live band and later Paul Fiumara again had the chance to show his talent on the guitar to the dancing crowd.

Following an optional after conference tour on the final day, Viola and I flew back to Melbourne, together with Cheree and her family. We went on to meet Gary Nugent and his partners Dario Gamba and Charles Knight at DFK Nugent in their office in downtown Melbourne. The office has around 30 members of staff and made a very good impression on me. After a city tour with Cheree and Gary, we took a tram ride to the seaside where we had lunch with her partners Tim Kelleher and Brent McCartney. We then headed to Cheree's office where we were given a tour and met the staff. All were very interested in

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DFK International and what is going on in the different regions. Later that evening, we had dinner with Cheree, her partner Terry Stramotas as well as Gary, his partners Dario Gamba and Charles Knight, and our spouses in a nice restaurant on the riverbank.

We flew back to Brisbane the next day where we had some time to explore the city. We later enjoyed a farewell dinner in a seafood restaurant with Paul Fiumara and Gavin Johns together with their wives.

The trip to Australia was fantastic, giving me the impression that the member firms of the ANZ National Group are in a very sound condition and cooperate very well. I wish all other Board Members of DFK International would have the chance to experience for themselves that the ANZ National Group is an outstanding example for DFK International.

ENDS

Picture caption: Pictured from left to right are, Paul Fiumara, Vice President DFK Asia Pacific Region, Roland W. Graf, President DFK International, Gavin Johns, Partner at DFK Hirn Newey & Paul Haupt, Partner at DFK Hirn Newey



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