



AUSTRALIA

CURRENT SITUATION

In 2009 the number of Australian spas grew to just over 600, an 8.3% increase from 2008. The spa industry was estimated to have employed almost 7,000 people in 2009, which was a 17% increase over 2008 employment numbers. Similarly, spa revenues are estimated to have increased by 17% in 2009 with spas generating AUD\$500 million (approximately USD\$465 million). (Intelligent Spas) While the industry continued to grow during the Global Financial Crisis (GFC) spa media saw a big fall in advertising spend.

In Australia 67% of spas are day spas (not co-located with accommodation) and 33% are what we call destination spas incorporating hotel, resort and retreat spas offering overnight accommodation. (Intelligent Spas) Increasingly resorts are including a spa as part of their overall offering. While day spas are generally seen as a luxury or special occasion experience, there is growth towards spa becoming part of a regular health and wellbeing routine. There appears to be a growing number of medi-spas with doctors and nurses involved as well as a growth in the number of indigenous and organic treatments. Energy healing and vibrational healing is gaining more consumer interest. Spa menus are also now offering fusion treatments. An example of this would be a concurrent body scrub and facial treatments.

At the beginning of April 2010 there were 167 members of the Australasian Spa Association from Australia and New Zealand up 13 from the end of 2009. State based Educational and Social Networking events are held every 3 months. The Annual Conference and ASpa Awards – spas of excellence will be held in late 2010.

INNOVATION

HEALTH AND WELLNESS TOURISM

Health and wellness tourism has been acknowledged by government as a significant industry and in September 2009 the Australian Tourism Export Council (ATEC) sponsored a Health and Wellbeing Conference on the Gold Coast to help support the spa and wellness industry (www.atec.net.au/451.html). The Victorian State Government has also backed the spa industry and in 2009 Tourism Victorian launched a AUD\$7.3 million, four year, Spa & Wellness Action Plan which includes a promotional campaign to position Victoria as the spa destination for Australia (www.tourism.vic.gov.au/spaandwellness).

HEALTH REFORM AND PREVENTION

More broadly, both Federal and State governments are acknowledging the urgent need for health reform and embracing prevention and wellness. In 2009 the Federal Government announced a National Preventative Health Strategy based on the “Australia: The Healthiest Country By 2020” report from the Preventive Health Taskforce (www.preventivehealth.org.au/). Similarly the Na-



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tional Health and Hospitals Reform Commission came out with a set of guiding principles that include “Strengthening prevention and wellness” with the acknowledgement that a comprehensive and holistic approach is needed to reorient the health system to provide greater emphasis on helping people stay healthy through stronger investment in wellness, prevention and early detection and appropriate intervention to maintain people in as optimal health as possible (www.health.gov.au/internet/nhhrc/publishing.nsf/Content/nhhrc-report).

MEDICAL PROFESSION

The need for a wellness approach that incorporates healthy lifestyles has been taken up by the medical profession with the establishment of the Australian Lifestyle Medicine Association which held its inaugural Conference in 2009 followed by a second conference in 2010 where doctors and other health professionals discussed the need for lifestyle interventions in the treatment and prevention of lifestyle related diseases (www.lifestylemedicine.net.au).

WORKPLACE WELLNESS

A similar trend towards embracing wellness is evident within industry sectors. The 2009 Australian Health and Productivity Management Conference (www.ahpmcongress.com.au) discussed the cost to business of absenteeism and the much more significant costs of ‘presenteeism’ (whereby workers turn up for work but are unproductive due to an ongoing illness). The business case for addressing wellness in the workplace is seen to include positive impacts on productivity, recruitment, retention and ultimate profitability with return on investment for effective workplace wellness programs estimated to be around \$3-5 for every dollar invested. As many employees spend a significant portion of their life at work, workplace wellness programs are also positioned to address the growing burden of chronic lifestyle-related disease.

A landmark report on the health benefits of contact with nature commissioned by Parks Victoria led to the inaugural ‘Healthy Parks Healthy People’ Congress in April 2010 with more than 1000 delegates from 35 countries conversing on the importance of contact with nature for health, the significance of “nature deficit disorder” and the implications for health and wellness tourism, eco-tourism and public policy (www.healthyparkshealthypeoplecongress.org).

EVIDENCED BASED MEDICINE AND MASSAGE

A study into the peer-reviewed literature on the health benefits and safety of massage commissioned by the Australian Association of Massage Therapists and performed by Dr. Kenny Ng and Prof Marc Cohen reviewed 740 papers and found that there is sufficient evidence to warrant massage therapy being integrated into primary care (www.aamt.com.au). This review is currently being written up for publication.

MASTER OF WELLNESS

The RMIT online Master of Wellness program has expanded significantly in 2010 with formal transfer of Academic Credit between RMIT’s Master of Wellness and with the UC Irvine Graduate Certificate in Spa Management and the offering of new elective courses in Wellness Coaching,

Energy Medicine, Aromatherapy and Mindbody Wellness. There is also ongoing development, with new courses being planned on Permaculture, Corporate & Workplace Wellness, and Yoga Teacher Training. There are now more than 20 academic staff teaching in this program including staff situated in the UK and US. An optional staff - student retreat has been planned for late November 2010 that will follow the World Wellness Project Summit in Melbourne (www.worldwellnessproject.com).

NEW BATHING CENTRE AND WELLNESS EDUCATION

Peninsula Hot Springs expanded significantly with the launch of a new hot springs bathing centre in December 2009. On offer are bathing experiences inspired by travels to hot springs and spas all over the globe including, a reflexology stone walk, steam cave, deep hydrotherapy and watsu pool, pools designed for infants and families, foot and hand baths, massaging high pressure thermal showers, and many more. Wellness courses for middle and high school students are being created and offered at Peninsula Hot Springs to encourage awareness in, and the early uptake of, life skills in the areas of positive attitude, proper breathing, movement, diet, stress management and relaxation.

INTERNET RESOURCES

The strong growth in social web-based networking continued with media such as: Twitter, Facebook, Youtube and E-mail newsletters. There is also a trend towards expansion of web based marketing channels servicing the spa industry with online services such as: www.dayspaguide.com.au, www.everydayindulgence.com.au, www.find4me.com.au, www.netbookings.com.au, and www.hotspringsearch.com.

SUBMITTED BY:

Professor Marc Cohen
Professor of Complementary Medicine
Program Leader, Master of Wellness
Bundoora, Australia

+61 3 9925-7440
marc.cohen@rmit.edu.au
www.rmit.edu.au/wellness

Charles Davidson
Owner & Director, Peninsula Hot Springs
Director of International Relations & Tourism
Australasian Spa Association
Victoria, Australia

+613 5950 8777
Charles@peninsulahotsprings.com.au
www.peninsulahotsprings.com

