

# 2021 Destinations International Prize

***Applicant:***

Stephanie Heyneke, Business Development Executive at Brisbane Economic Development Agency

**What excites you about working for a bureau and how are you making a difference?**

Brisbane is a city of opportunity. Twelve years ago, I chose Brisbane as my home for the opportunity to study at world-class universities, to work with innovative businesses, and to raise my family as part of a connected and sustainable community.

I joined the Brisbane Economic Development Agency to use my passion for Brisbane to promote our dynamic and growing city to the world. I am excited by the impact we make every day for the people of Brisbane, and the Greater Brisbane Region. Every conference we secure for Brisbane supports and creates local jobs, provides new networks for students and researchers, and expands opportunities for businesses to grow and innovate.

**What is unique about your destination that no other destination has to offer?**

Brisbane is a city of connection. Our collaborative Team Brisbane approach sets us apart from other destinations. Brisbane is recognised as a gateway to the Asia Pacific, connecting businesses and researchers across the region. The city is home to a unique knowledge corridor, with knowledge-based businesses, universities, research institutes, hospitals, and venues all connected by Brisbane's transport hubs.

Our Business Events team is uniquely positioned within the Brisbane Economic Development Agency. We simply walk down the hallway to connect with colleagues in Major Events, Tourism, Industry Growth & Trade, and Corporate Partnerships. Our unique structure, and broader Team Brisbane approach, provides event organisers with a collaborative and connected network of industry stakeholders. Organisers can be connected to an internationally recognised talent pool of speakers, exhibitors, sponsors, and delegates to add value to their business event.

Australia's continued border closure has resulted in a saturated national conference market. Cities that have traditionally focused on the international conference market are now reasserting their city brand domestically. Most of Australia's bureaux are offering attractive subvention packages, meaning money is no longer the deal-making driver it once was. Now, destinations need to offer more.

Brisbane's focus has always been on ways we can support clients to deliver successful events outside of direct financial support, so we've invested our time in developing our knowledge economy. In the first half of 2021, Brisbane ran a limited and targeted subvention campaign to support our venues and suppliers in their COVID-19 economic recovery. Conferences that were ineligible for funding were still winnable because of our proven ability to connect conferences to industry and to support organisers with local knowledge and networks.

**As a future bureau leader, what do you think is needed to be successful in this competitive marketplace?**

Brisbane is a city of community. I believe a leader needs to foster that sense of community, identifying and empowering the dreamers and the doers to innovate destination marketing. In a time of immense change and uncertainty, our bureaux need leaders who can build flexible and resilient workplaces. Our staff need to feel safe and valued. Our specific roles have evolved over the last 18 months to support the changing needs of our industry, as we work towards economic recovery. It's not about titles but about strengths, working with each staff member to get the best out of the team and the best outcomes for our bureau members and Brisbane residents. The world is forever changed and it's our job to find and create new industry opportunities and to support and connect our destination community.