



MEDIA RELEASE

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BRILLIANT MINDS AND INFLUENTIAL INNOVATORS JOIN GOLD COAST'S *BE CONNECTED* PROGRAM

Destination Gold Coast is launching another phase of its ambitious plans to attract more delegates and continue to build the visitor economy with the revitalised business events ambassador program, [*BE Connected Gold Coast*](#).

BE Connected Gold Coast will include leaders from the valuable academic and scientific world, in addition to a new generation of industry leaders, thought leaders and game changers who are driving change, growing their industries, and helping to move the city forward.

Destination Gold Coast's Head of Business Events Selina Sinclair said she is delighted to launch the program with Gold Coast Mayor Tom Tate accepting the role as Patron and is looking forward to ongoing collaboration with a wide range of leading figures across all areas of the economy.

"We are excited to launch *BE Connected Gold Coast* with eight leaders who are making a big impact through their contribution to the social, cultural and economic achievements of the city," Ms Sinclair said.

"They will showcase the Gold Coast's changing profile as a hub for innovation, by attracting and building best in class business events whose benefits go beyond visitation and are a key contributor to the city's growth."

Mayor Tate said he is honoured to launch *BE Connected Gold Coast* supported by a selection of diverse influential leaders who are passionate about the city and committed to helping it grow as a host destination for business events.

"As Patron, I am pleased to announce the first three leaders to join the renewed campaign are Rebecca Frizelle OAM, Dr Hal Rice, and Dr Dinesh Palipana OAM. They are the first of many who we will invite to support the city," Cr Tate said.

"These three extraordinary people will work with us to expand the program and promote the city as a place to do business and exchange knowledge through meetings, incentives, conventions and exhibitions.

"These leaders are contributing to the Gold Coast's extraordinary reputation as a place where innovation is flourishing; a region of Australia where investment in research and start-ups, health, science, sport, screen, education and many other areas is booming."

Ms Sinclair said business events are not just an important driver of the Gold Coast economy but provide a platform to exchange knowledge, discuss and debate new ideas and creates a mechanism for advancement across the city.

"Gold Coast's Australian of the Year, renowned stroke specialist and one of the founding ambassadors from the original program, Dr Hal Rice is a great example of partnering with Destination Gold Coast to not only bring events to our city but through his work is putting the Gold Coast on the world medical stage," she said.

“Dr Rice has continued to bring international medical conferences to the Gold Coast, generating millions of dollars in economic benefit for the city and is now, through both public and private sector investment, in the final stages of building a world-class training centre for image-guided surgeries right here at the Gold Coast’s \$1 billion Health and Knowledge Precinct.”

Earlier this year, Destination Gold Coast launched a new business events brand with the positioning ‘The Imagination Capital of Australia’. It was designed to present the Gold Coast in a new light and highlight the strengths Gold Coast has as a destination across a broad range of industries.

“Our stunning natural assets are widely appealing, but we have so much more to offer. Our new program will help us to leverage these strengths to drive more business and investment in the city,” Ms Sinclair said.

Destination Gold Coast will work closely with the City of Gold Coast and its Economic Development unit to maximise the impact of the new business events program.

ENDS

Rebecca Frizelle OAM

Co-owner NRL Gold Coast Titans, Organising Committee of the 2032 Olympic Games, Deputy Chancellor Griffith University

Rebecca has made her name as a business leader in the motoring sector and in sport. After 31 years in the motor industry, representing multiple global brands on the Gold Coast, she recently stepped down to focus on non-executive roles. She was the first female Chair in the NRL and is proudly a 50% co-owner of the Gold Coast Titans. Rebecca is proud of the Titan’s inaugural NRLW team, entering the competition in 2022, and the continued growth of the Titans Leaguability teams, supporting people with physical and intellectual disabilities. She is on the Organising Committee for the 2032 Olympic Games and is also a Director of Paralympics Australia as well as being a Director of a wide range of other organisations, including LifeFlight Australia. The Gold Coast is her home – she loves its beaches and coastal beauty and also the spirit of enterprise and opportunity that it fosters.

Dinesh Palipana OAM

Doctor, lawyer, disability advocate and researcher, 2021 Queensland Australian of the Year

Dr Palipana is an extraordinary human. He is a doctor, lawyer, disability advocate and researcher. He is also Queensland’s first medical graduate with quadriplegia and the second doctor with quadriplegia to work clinically in Australia. He fought hard for his own education after the motor vehicle accident which changed his life forever. Now he advocates for making education accessible to children irrespective of their disability and also works in one of the country’s busiest accident and emergency hospital department. In 2021 he was named Queensland Australian of the Year for his outstanding advocacy work for those who live with a disability. He loves living on the Gold Coast – where he works alongside some of the brightest minds in the country. At the Gold Coast Health and Knowledge Precinct he is co-lead researcher on Biospine, a project which aims to restore movement to those with spinal cord injury.

Dr Hal Rice

Director Interventional Neuroradiology Gold Coast University Hospital, Associate Professor Griffith University School of Medicine, Founding Partner Qscan Group

Dr Rice could have worked anywhere in the world but chose the Gold Coast for his extraordinary work in neuroradiology. His pioneering work transforms the way people with strokes, aneurisms and vascular disease are treated. For the past 20 years, Dr Rice has been working on collaborations that have established the Gold Coast as the leading centre for health and medical science. In partnership with Dr Laetitia de Villiers, he leads a team of doctors, nurses and radiographers that are doing formidable work that is global best-practice. Dr Rice and his team are also working on creating a major teaching facility for doctors from around the world – a facility that will take his field of medicine into the new area of robotics and artificial intelligence for vascular surgery. It’s pure innovation in all its glory – and a lot of the inspiration, imagination and drive is stimulated by what is made possible on the Gold Coast.

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