

SPOTLIGHT ON TECHNOLOGY

GOLD COAST CONVENTION AND
EXHIBITION CENTRE



GCCEC Technology

Going viral: How GCCEC takes conferences online

COVID-19 presents a whole new set of challenges and considerations for delegate engagement – and in this climate, it's essential for venues like the Gold Coast Convention and Exhibition Centre to provide both face-to-face and virtual solutions for hosting events.

The team at GCCEC is agile, resourceful and experienced in creating and managing hybrid events, and the venue's spaces and facilities are supremely capable of catering to evolving needs.

These are skills and assets that can be deployed in the face of changing conditions, ensuring there is a Plan B in place that can be quickly called upon in the event of a lockdown or tightening restrictions.

Since the beginning of COVID-19, GCCEC Executive Manager of Technology Ben Morris says his team has successfully converted a large number of events and counting into a hybrid event model.

"The nature of our event space and team allows us to equally engage live face-to-face events and online hybrid event experiences," Morris says.

"We have a dedicated team of in-house technology experts that combine expertise in audio visual and information technology, together with on-site equipment to seamlessly deliver hybrid event elements. "Our COVID Safe Plan includes the finer details of sanitation when it comes to a production, like presenter equipment, laptops, touchscreens and microphones, and our team are cognisant of COVID hygiene and how it's portrayed in a broadcast event."

Given the changing nature of COVID restrictions, it's only natural that there might be some hesitation in booking events at the moment. But Morris points out that GCCEC has a proven track record of working promptly to facilitate requirements to ensure events can proceed under challenging conditions.

"With open lines of communication between the client and operational team, we are able to work within the boundaries of changing requirements as information comes to light," Morris says.

"Every event, no matter how small or large, has a dedicated Technical Event Manager as the client's point of contact, and a Production Manager who is tasked with delivering all of the technical elements.

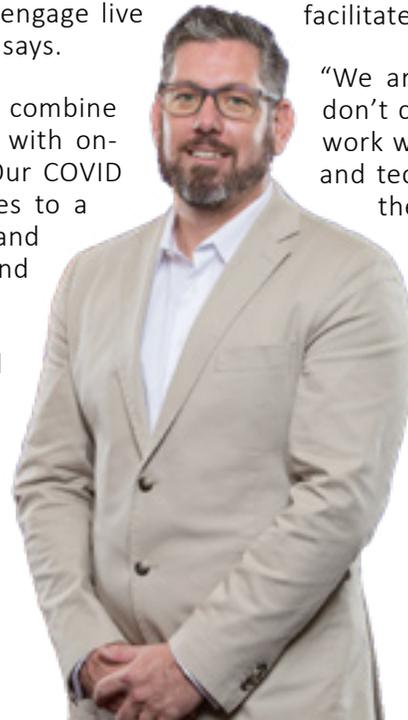
"By owning all of our own mobile equipment and having meeting rooms installed with the latest hybrid-ready technology, we're ready for almost every possibility. Our IT team delivers a network that provides wired connectivity in every room and Wi-Fi access across the property. Together with our multiple independent high bandwidth internet supplies, this provides the centre with best practice connectivity and network redundancy.

"If a change of conditions occurs due to COVID-19, we can react immediately, working with the client on- or off-site to change or modify the event to facilitate delegates that are not able to attend in a timely manner.

"We are able to manage budgets to ensure that last-minute changes don't cause budget blowouts. If there is a change during the event, we work with the client to revise our resources, both in terms of personnel and technical equipment, to ensure the event is still deliverable within the budget.

"Hybrid event contingencies and associated costs can also be workshopped pre-production to give our clients a sense of comfort that a Plan B can be deployed effectively."

Ben Morris - Executive Manager, Technology





Hybrid at GCCEC

APP 2021

The Pharmacy Guild of Australia's annual national conference, the Australian Pharmacy Professional Conference & Trade Exhibition (APP), is the largest pharmacy and trade show in the nation, with over 5,000 delegates and 400 exhibitors.

In 2020, APP was the first conference at GCCEC to be affected by COVID-19 regulations. The venue quickly pivoted to successfully bring key speakers to delegates through APP Online, broadcast live from the GCCEC arena.

In 2021, APP was organised as a hybrid event with a strong delegate attendance and a full program of face-to-face sessions. With changing COVID requirements limiting the amount of people that could attend these sessions, GCCEC worked with the client to pivot and make adjustments for these requirements within a 72-hour time frame.

Control measures were taken into consideration such as physical distancing and revised capacity numbers in conferencing spaces.

"Understanding these challenges, our team worked with the client and their production teams and created overflow areas using large LED screens in foyer spaces to allow delegates to safely gather, while maintaining the engaging experience of being in the main conference room," Morris says.

"This was a critical move so that APP was able to offer the same level of experience to all of their attendees."

"We worked closely with the client to provide the necessary equipment to facilitate live streaming and recording of all sessions throughout the event, with concessions made to deliver the additional technology within the budget for the event."



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AREC 2021

After postponing its 2020 event due to COVID-19 health directions, the Australasian Real Estate Conference (AREC) – hosted by TRET, a leading Real Estate industry educator – was back at GCCEC in 2021 for a two-day event at the end of May.

With 43 speakers and over 4,000 delegates from across the nation, this conference focuses on sales, property management and mortgage broking and aims to drive the real estate industry forward with its jam-packed event program.

AREC predicted there would be continued disruptions to events in 2021, and as such, based their 2021 event planning on a **hybrid** model as a contingency plan.

This decision proved to be a solid move, as COVID restrictions tightened in Victoria, restricting movement between States.

AREC partnered with respected national production house AV1 to produce the event. AV1 provided the online platform and GCCEC supplied all of the on-site technology for the event, including cameras and crew, mixing and vision processing and networking and computing capabilities to stream all sessions.

Everything was in place to deliver the event virtually to the remote attendees, allowing the conference to continue smoothly. By already having virtual options in place, event planners are given the assurance that a hybrid element can be deployed – and whether there are 100 or 1,000 remote viewers, the on-site costs are the same.

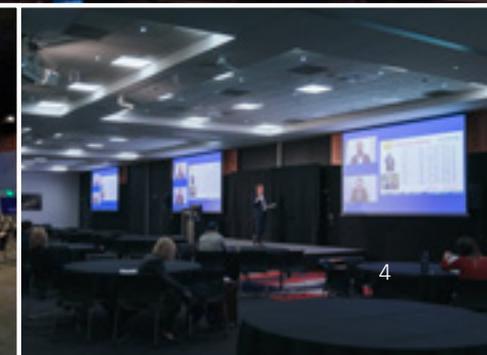
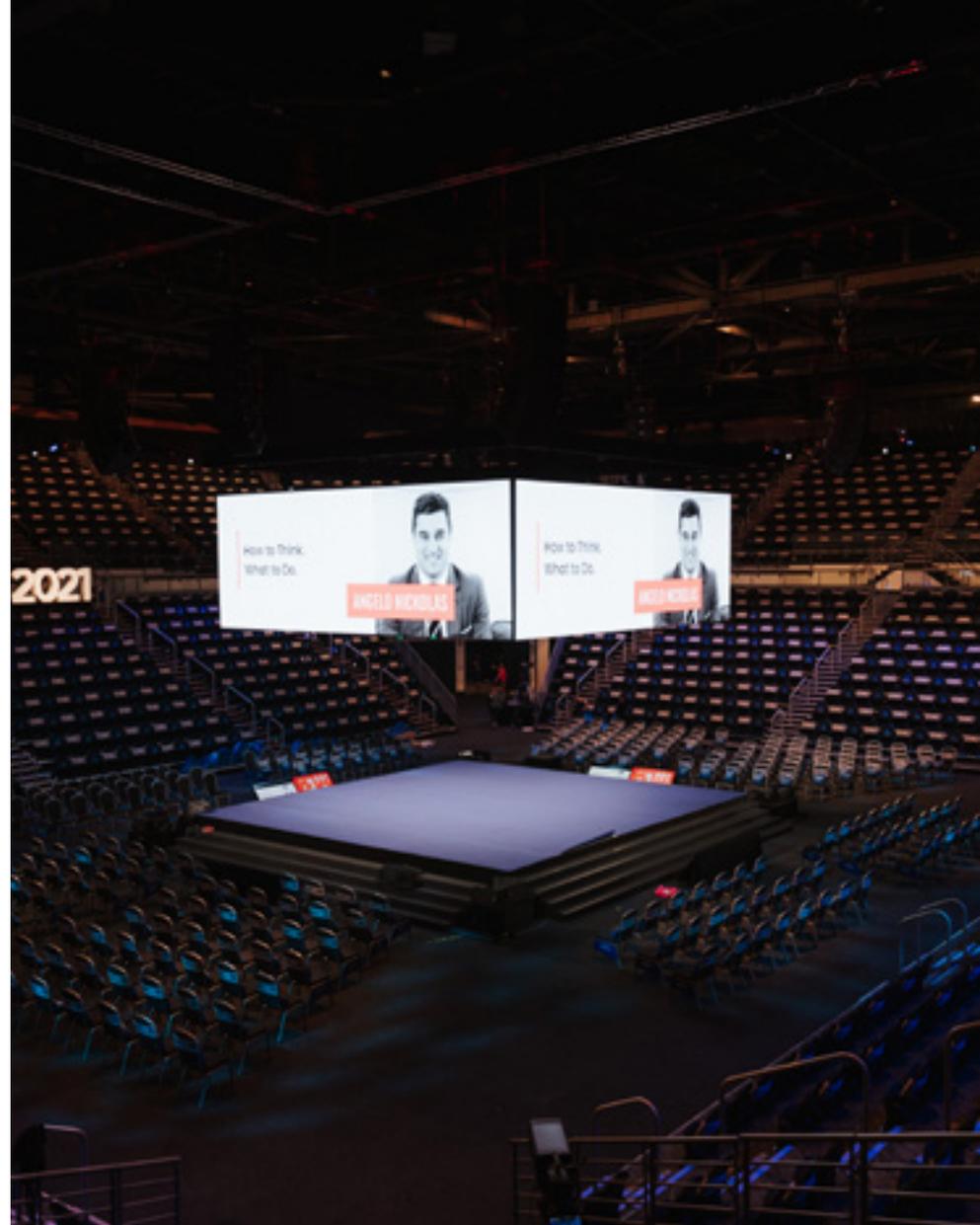
“This was very much a joint production between GCCEC and AV1,” Morris says. “Our technology team is well placed to partner with external production companies and hybrid event platforms.

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The delivery, design and branding of an online platform is often best supplied and arranged pre-conference. GCCEC are experts at providing everything on-site, ensuring an engaging product both face-to-face and online.

Ben Morris - Executive Manager, Technology

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RETAIL GLOBAL 2021

For the past decade, the Retail Global conference has brought the eCommerce community together at GCCEC to hear from sought-after speakers, attend a variety of workshops and participate in a range of networking opportunities.

After COVID forced the Retail Global team to postpone last year's conference, everything was on track to kick off the 2021 event from 29-31 March at GCCEC. But on the first morning of the conference, a snap three-day lockdown was announced for Greater Brisbane, stranding both attendees and presenters.

"This announcement required significant last minute adjustments to be made, and our team – along with the production crew from Retail Global – had to work quickly to find a solution," Morris says.

"Our venue assets give us the agility to work in a very dynamic environment. We have the facilities on-site to undertake recordings of conference sessions at the client's request, and were able to utilise this equipment in the case of Retail Global.

"The meeting rooms are hybrid-ready with camera and recording equipment always on standby and while the larger rooms require equipment to be set up, the GCCEC crew are able to aid in this in a timely manner."

Despite these challenges, those who couldn't attend the conference in person still reaped the benefits of the content through recorded sessions filmed throughout the event.

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CONCLUSION

GCCEC clients have been impressed time and time again with our professionalism and attention to detail that enables them to hold hybrid events smoothly. The team goes above and beyond what has been quoted on, and the overall delegate experience and client satisfaction is what we strive for.

While each of these events looked different, there was one constant. GCCEC is an adaptable, flexible and agile venue space, with the expertise to work with clients on creating the best outcomes possible under any given circumstances.

Whether it's a pre-planned hybrid event, or a streaming solution to an unplanned event disruption, GCCEC can provide the experience, equipment and support to allow events to go ahead successfully.

