



## FOUNDATION EXPO '88

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Foundation Expo '88 Meeting and Launch

Presentation Notes – John McGregor

30<sup>th</sup> APRIL 2004

### 1. Welcome

- (a) Welcome Distinguished Guests
- (b) Welcome former Expo staff members
- (c) Welcome former visitors
- (d) Welcome the curious – we hope you will be a part of our journey
- (e) Distribute evening schedule

### 2. Acknowledgements

(a) Firstly, like to acknowledge the aboriginal and ancestral owners of the land where we are meeting today

(b) Secondly, like to acknowledge the World Expo '88 Authority, led expertly by Chair & CEO, the Hon Sir Llewellyn Edwards, AC, without which World Expo '88 wouldn't have been the great success it was

(c) Thirdly, I'd like to acknowledge the support of expo-related persons and organisations, without whose support the very idea of a web-site and Foundation for Expo '88 would not have been possible. I will be speaking more about these persons during the course of this evening.

### 3. Foundation Expo '88 – why?

(a) I'll take the liberty of explaining a bit about my own background and how the Foundation Expo '88 project came to be born

(b) Child of the 70s, grew up in my teen years with the Expo growing on the Southbank site and with my knowledge of Japanese, was determined to get a job with

Japan at World Expo '88.

(c) Studied Japanese through high school, went there on exchange in '85 and then later for a year in '87. Towards the end of my stay, quite fortuitously a parent of one of my school friends had a brother who was working for JETRO, and lo and behold, within two weeks I had my interview for the Japan Pavilion in Tokyo – it was a success.

(d) Returned to Brisbane in March 1988, and almost immediately began training with the pavilion – everything from how to walk and sit, how to serve orange juice, and the different types of bows for different situations was covered, as well as the golden rule – KISS – keep it simple stupid!

(e) The Japan Pavilion was a wonderful entree to the Exposition, and during the six months of the fair, I tried to savour as much of the Expo experience as I could, partly in amazement at the international cosmopolitan place the Expo site was, and partly in wonder that this beautiful butterfly had blossomed at right here on Brisbane's door-step.

(f) I learnt as much about Expositions as I could – and infected by the 'Expo bug', made a determined effort to join with some of my Japanese colleagues and work from one Expo to the other. At the end of the Exposition, I was asked help assist in the demolition of the Pavilion, and in February 1989 the remaining attendants from the Pavilion were asked to attend the official 're-opening' of the popular Japanese Garden, now re-located at the Mt-Cooth-tha Botanical Gardens.

(g) On the last night of the exposition, as fireworks were lifted from Brisbane high-rise buildings across the river, and as thousands of ex-employees sang to “The Carnival” is over by “The Seekers” and playfully jostled over a dozen large inflated 'globe' balloons, I made my decision to learn Spanish and work at the Universal Exposition in Seville – in 4 years time.

(h) I commenced a B.A. degree in Asian Studies at Griffith University, all the while having Seville on my sights at the end of my degree. The third year of the degree I spent on scholarship in Japan, and I visited Seville for the first time for a month's language course, in February 1991 just before taking up the scholarship. During this time I was also taken away with the hope and expectation that an exposition creates in a host city, and also managed to visit the under construction Exposition site – more than some five times larger than Brisbane's Expo '88. I also received the name of the head of Public Relations, and remembered it well.

(i) The year in Japan went quickly and I kept my Spanish up to date by doing Spanish classes by night.

(j) Come early March 1992, just one month before the opening day, I was back in Seville, having secured an interview with PR over the telephone from Australia. I was

kept waiting 1 ½ hours for the interview and was told that the emphasis is to employ Spaniards from Seville, and I also felt my Spanish was not good enough at the interview.

(k) Not crest-fallen, I continued reading any articles in the paper regarding the Exposition, and sought interviews with hotels, and other tourism-related organisations.

(l) The opening came and went, and I still did not have a job, and I was also running out of money....but two days after the opening I got a phone call from a colleague of mine from the Japan Pavilion of Expo '88 to say that the Expo Authority is now looking for multi-lingual guides, and as luck should have it, the next day I had an interview with one of the secretaries in PR, and got the job!

(m) I won't go into depth about my experiences at Expo '92 now, except for the fact that whilst Brisbane's exposition was an international specialized one, Seville's Expo was a universal exposition.

(n) What's the difference, you may ask? International specialized expositions usually have a specialized theme – such as Brisbane's – Leisure in the Age of Technology, and they are also different from an architectural point of view in that the Expo Authority constructs the pavilion modules and rents them to participating countries. In Universal Expositions, the themes are much broader – as in Seville – 'Discovery', tying in with the 5<sup>th</sup> Centenary of the discovery of the Americas, and the participating nation must design as well as construct the Pavilion, leading to huge architectural contracts as each country tries to better the other in the function AND form of their pavilion.

(o) Seville concluded, the next exposition was in Taejon, 1993, South Korea. A 3-month specialized exposition, the Taejon International Exposition celebrated the centenary of the first Korean representation at a world's exposition in the Chicago Exposition of 1893. Once again, fortune smiled on me, and I worked for the Press Center of the Exposition as an English-language Press-Writer.

(p) Taejon will be remembered for it's compact river-side site, as well as the enormous contribution by Korean private enterprise in their pavilions. I was one of only two caucasian employees of the 6, 000 strong Korean Exposition authority.

(q) Next expo? Budapest 1996 didn't come off the ground. Lisboa 1998 – didn't speak Portuguese. Hannover 2000 didn't speak German. But in 2001 I came across a web-site called expomuseum.com, by an American design student Urso Chappell. Chappell in his well designed web-site was attempting to catalog and chronicle every world exposition on his site, and it also featured a group internet discussion forum. It changed my life!

(r) Through Expo Museum and visiting the Bureau of International Expositions web-site, (the organizing body for World Expos) it came to my knowledge that there was to

be a General Assembly of the BIE in Seville in October 2002, to mark the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Exposition there.

(s) I tried to find out as much information as I could, and found out that a new association was to be born at the assembly – the inaugural meeting of the Assembly of Expo Cities and Regions, of which any city or region that has hosted an exposition is an automatic member.

(t) I tried to lobby City Hall to send a delegate, however, City Hall had their own priorities with their upcoming Asia-Pacific Cities summit. So, after contacting the Assembly organizers of the Seville meeting, I managed to get a job working as a volunteer assistant at the Assembly – the next best thing to being the Brisbane delegate to the meeting.

(u) The meeting was a unique fusion of cultures and peoples from civic representatives from a wide selection of former expo cities and regions, and I was considerably impressed by the delegations that visited and the information that they had to share of their exposition – books, pamphlets, even interactive multi-media CD-roms that cataloged their city's role in the international exposition movement, and was struck by Brisbane's absence in terms of a delegate, as well as the lack of any information materials or retrospective work on Brisbane's expo either....

(v) I left Seville after the four-day assembly determined to do something about it – hence the Foundation Expo '88 project was born!

5. Now it's time to turn to the other half of the coin – the interested members that will keep the Expo '88 dream sustained. Who are we all? What is our link with Expo '88? Where have we come from? What are our expectations? What are our dreams?

6. What is the web-site and how will it help us? (Hand out Site Map)

(a) Let's have a look at the web-site now and try to see what the Foundation is all about.

(b) The four goals

(1) The role of the web-site – communication, rallying point for all the other goals

(2) Interested members association – guest speakers, events, social, administrative functions – perhaps one day an honorary incorporation dedicated to keeping the World Expo '88 dream alive

(3) Identifying ways in which Expo '88 can be better remembered in Brisbane and overseas

(4) Medium-term to long-term goal of a permanent Museum/Commemorative Centre on the former exposition site – the now popular Southbank Parklands.

7. As some of you may know, the Foundation Expo '88 web-site was officially 'turned on' at 10.00 am this morning. Let's spend the next few minutes doing an overview of the web-site and what it offers, and for that I've created a special part of the site, entitled "What to Do at Foundation Expo '88" (hand out).

8. Let's work through each of these points to get an overview of the site and how to navigate it.

(9). 'Things to do at Foundation Expo '88'

10. Conclusion – That's the backbone of the web-site, I hope you've liked the tour and get to visit again and again in your own time. The next part of this evening is a bit of administration and also a break. I'm handing out an interested members data-base form to give us an idea of what you think the priorities of the Foundation should be, and how you can contribute. Please fill these out and return to me before the end of the break.

Let's come back in 20 mins.

11. I hope you've had a good break and are suitably refreshed. Before we go onto the next activity, I'd like to first of all collect the survey papers, and also take this moment to read some of the messages from persons who couldn't be here this evening. (Read list).

12. What we're going to do now is have a 'brain storming' group discussion on the three main goals of the Foundation. (i) The Foundation as an association / incorporation (ii) The web-site and (iii) Museum. I'll give you a number from one to three, then we can split into the three groups, where I'd like you to discuss what you think could be possible things to do for each of these goals. We'll have 10 mins or so, then I'll get a representative from each group to deliver a summary of the findings, and I'll also need a note-taker to jot down the results.

13. (10 minute Discussion)

14. (Summary of results) – these thoughts will be collated with results from the earlier

survey.

15. Evening is just about over, we've covered a lot of ground, but before our last administrative function of the evening, I would like to bring forward a symbolic start to the new Foundation – cutting of the Foundation Expo '88 cake. If you would like to get another coffee – now is the time.

16. Ladies & Gentlemen, I hereby declare Foundation Expo '88 open! Long live World Expo '88!

17. First administrative function of the new association, I will call for persons interested in forming an interim executive arm of the association, namely, President, Secretary and Treasurer. If there is another position I haven't mentioned, please mention that now too.

President

Secretary

Treasurer

18. Show of hands for the next meeting. Shall I suggest 3-6 months? 30<sup>th</sup> July or 30<sup>th</sup> October. One meeting may be conducted in a newsletter format. For example, 2 meetings a year, with 2 e-mail newsletters for the in between months. In that case, may I propose the next e-newsletter be for 30<sup>th</sup> July, with the next meeting Sat 30<sup>th</sup> October 2004, here at Cafe San Marco.

19. At ..... p.m. I now hereby declare the inaugural meeting of Foundation Expo '88 closed.