

The first LinuxWorld Conference & Expo ever in Australia

SUNSHINE IN SYDNEY

March 2006 saw the first LinuxWorld Conference & Expo ever in Australia. The event was held in perfect weather over three days in Sydney. **BY PIA WAUGH**

LinuxWorld Australia had a combination of excellent speakers and a genuine effort to cater to business and government. There was also some strong community participation in LinuxWorld, which really showed business and government representatives the value of the community itself.

LinuxWorld came to Australia at an excellent time, when businesses and Government agencies are becoming keenly interested in FOSS but are struggling to find vendor-neutral information. LinuxWorld provided that opportunity, and we saw at the event many people who hadn't had their needs catered to in the past.

The conference itself was split into two sections, the Business Days and a Government Day, but there were also several Australian Open Source community groups invited to have booths at the trade show. All up, almost 3,000 people attended the trade show and conference with great feedback.

Business Tracks

The first two days of the conference focused on open source in business, cover-

ing topics such as open source business models, the legal landscape, how to make an open source strategy and more. The event opened with Jon 'maddog' Hall talking about FOSS in business; the keynote had the largest attendance for the entire two business days.

The tracks also covered emerging open source technologies in Australia such as Annodex and had many case studies never before seen in Australia such as Rising Sun Pictures, WIN Television, and Undercover Wear. There were also some of the open source commercial bigwigs from HP, Novell, IBM, Sophos, and Oracle to talk about Open Source in the enterprise and in their organisations. Even Microsoft had a speaker there.

Government Day

The Government Day was a new thing for LinuxWorld generally. The big drawcard of the day was Peter Quinn, the former CIO of Massachusetts, who gave an excellent presentation about why it is imperative for governments to look to open standards and open source. Peter then did a spiderman and changed into a sandals and ponytail outfit to show his

sense of humour after his comments on community dress sense had been taken way out of context by the media.

The day also saw excellent representation from the International Open Source Network, the Malaysian Government, the New Zealand Government, and, of course, the Aus-

tralian Government. The event was very well attended with some great coverage of both local and international views on open source topics. LinuxWorld really has kicked off some great discussions. Several people commented that it was the only government and FOSS conference they had ever been to where every single presentation was excellent and relevant.

Trade Show

At the trade show, the Linux Australia stand seemed to be one of the most busy stands for the entire three days which really shows that people think and care about the community aspect of FOSS. The Linux Australia crew showed off XGL and other eye candy while handing out pamphlets about the importance of user groups. They even had new people turn up to the next Sydney Linux User Group meeting.

At the Novell booth, free coffee was handed out to people who used Novell's consoles. HP showed off some fantastic hardware and applications, and Red Hat had a cluster of access machines for people to play on. IBM had some tasty hardware to check out, and also ran the Hatchery, a place where trade show attendees were treated to extra round of free talks. The trade show itself was a fascinating mix of global players and smaller companies showing off a huge variety of open source ideas and innovations. It was always bustling, very energetic and informative.

Great Success

All in all, LinuxWorld Conference and Expo in Australia was a great success: an energy-packed event with many questions, fantastic speakers, and tutorials. The conference schedule was designed to help businesses and government to learn more about the opportunities and challenges of open source software, while at the same time prompting them to think about OSS above and beyond business concerns to the potential community and government benefits. ■



Figure 1: Jeff and Pia Waugh with Peter Quinn on the Linux Australia stand at Sydney LinuxWorld show.