

Airlines Team Up Supporting New Mardi Gras

One of Sydney's largest public events, the annual Gay & Lesbian Mardi Gras has announced the signing of a new sponsorship agreement making Sir Richard Branson's **Virgin Blue Airlines Group** official airlines for the event.

Management of the celebration, New Mardi Gras has said the sponsorship includes brand new long haul international airline V Australia, long time New Mardi Gras supporter Virgin Blue and sister airline Pacific Blue which flies to New Zealand and the South Pacific Islands.

The new four year agreement, designed to target growth in visitor numbers to the Sydney Gay & Lesbian Mardi Gras will see the airlines assist in promoting the event across a growing network now spanning 28 Australian cities and towns and 13 international destinations including the USA, South Pacific and Southeast Asian countries.

Mardi Gras is an amazing, spectacular, international celebration and across our network our team understand the significance and importance of it, said Heather Jeffery, general manager of media and communications for the Virgin Blue Airlines Group.

Many of our Virgin Blue team members have had enormous fun supporting Mardi Gras for the past three years. With our expanding network, we look forward to bringing more international and local visitors to experience the colour, creativity and community which underpin this iconic Sydney event, she said.

I am so proud that Virgin Blue is back for another term and tremendously excited that V Australia has come on board, said New Mardi Gras CEO Anna McInerney.

It demonstrates the value Virgin sees in the partnership it has had with New Mardi Gras over the last three years, while the addition of V Australia will mean expanded support in international markets.

Through this exciting new partnership, patrons will be able to access a range of great flight options through Virgin Blue, V Australia and Pacific Blue.

We will be encouraging people to fly with New Mardi Gras friendly airlines and Virgin Blue and V Australia's booking facilities will be easily accessible via the New Mardi Gras website so that patrons can easily find flight prices and times for their trip to Sydney.

In August, Events NSW research showing that Mardi Gras brought over 21,000 visitors into New South Wales in 2009, generating almost \$30 million in new money for the State.

Tell 'Em They're A Star



Lollypotz founder Louise Curtis.

It's that time of year when corporate gifting and staff rewards are top of mind for many organisations. But rather than giving gifts that are rarely wanted and never used, **Lollypotz** has got something that will go down a treat - Chocolate bouquets.

Founder and managing director Louise Curtis launched Lollypotz in late 2008 offering a unique gift product that certainly won't last long in the office.

Initially launched in Canberra, Lollypotz is rapidly growing with 25 franchises across Australia. In true rags to riches style, Curtis left school at 15 without qualifications or expectations of making her mark on the Australian retailing landscape.

Unable to source attractive, superior quality gift hampers to send to clients locally, the savvy businesswoman started making her own. Realising the potential of the idea, she launched her first business, online and retail corporate gift supplier Hamperesque, from her living room in 2003. An immediate success story, the business now dispatches up to 50,000 hampers annually.

Introducing chocolate bouquets to the Hamperesque range, it soon became clear that the fun, tastebud-tempting bouquets had the potential to excel as a stand-alone business. Putting her Telstra prize-money to good use, the Lollypotz concept was born.

"If you'd asked me 12 months ago," she says. "There's no way I would have foreseen the success of Lollypotz."

Keen to give back to the community that has

supported her, the socially-aware business owner works with local job network Job Solve to provide employment for people with disabilities, donates a percentage of Lollypotz's profits to charities such as the Save the Children Fund and supports many grassroots and sporting organisations in the Canberra area.

Lollypotz has plans to roll out another 35 franchises nationally as well as going international, says Curtis. "I have a saying stuck on the wall of my office," she says. "It says don't let the best you have done so far be the standard for the rest of your life. That's how I like to live my life."

The Lollypotz range includes tastebud-tempting chocolate bouquets and boxes for all occasions, as well as specialised collections: Baby Potz, Potz of Love, Liquor Potz, Potz for Him and Festive Potz. All products can be ordered in-store, online at lollypotz.com.au

