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Push to double international events

MEREDITH BOOTH

ADELAIDE'S Convention Tourism Authority wants to double the number of international conferences it holds each year and has enlisted 55 local ambassadors to help the cause.

The ambassador program, Conventions Adelaide, will be launched tonight at Parliament House.

ACTA chief executive Damien Kitto hopes international events will grow in the next three years from 10 to 20 per cent of events, now worth \$90 million annually.

After a soft launch of the program in March 2008, ambassadors have helped to attract nine events, worth about \$28 million to the

state, including the 1100-delegate Ausbiotech convention in 2011, worth \$5.3 million, and the 2010 Eastern Regional Organisation for Planning and Human Settlements Golden Jubilee Congress.

Fierce competition from Asian cities have thrust Adelaide down the ranks of the International Congress and Convention Association's (ICCA) best convention destinations, from 51 to 84, in recent years as some Asian cities offer cash incentives to host events.

"Money talks, but it's not everything," Mr Kitto said.

However, its three-year plan target, enhanced by ambassadors,

would lift Adelaide's ranking back into the fifties, he said.

Most of the ambassadors are from medical, scientific, academic and business backgrounds and will work with ACTA to identifying opportunities.

Speakers at tonight's launch include ambassador program patron and state Tourism Minister Jane Lomax-Smith and World President of the World Council of Enterostomal Nurses, Elizabeth English, who helped secure her profession's 1000-delegate congress to Adelaide in 2012.



TEAMWORK: Conventions Adelaide ambassadors Jurgen Michaelis, Elizabeth English, Damien Kitto and Professor Ruth Salom.

Picture: TOM LEE