

QCB Advisory Board Members 2022-23

Hotels



Clare Almeida

Sales Manager, Gibbston Valley Lodge & Spa

After starting in the tourism industry in 2007, Clare gained extensive experience across the accommodation, venues, events as well as activity sectors. Arriving in Queenstown in 2010, Clare held a myriad of roles encompassing co-ordination and management positions across both hotels and activity businesses. This provided her with a skill set ideally suited to raising Queenstown's profile to both domestic and international visitors. She spent the next 8 years working for a selection of hotels (Crowne Plaza and Rydges Queenstown) as well as Real Journeys in a sales capacity. In September 2019 she made the move to Auckland and initially continued her role at Wayfare prior to the pandemic. She was recruited as the Sales Manager at Ellerslie Event Centre, before her sense of civic duty drove her to want to assist with the vaccine rollout in Auckland. Now that Clare is back in Queenstown, she is thrilled to have joined the Gibbston Valley team with a role overseeing sales across accommodation, activities, and restaurant outlets.



Jo Finnigan

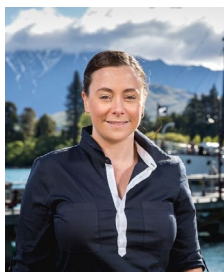
General Manager, Hotel St Moritz

With more than 19 year's tenure in Accor Hotels having held key roles in Sales, Marketing & Distribution, Jo is well known in the MICE industry. Her last 5 years at the helm of one of Queenstown's most admired hotels, Jo brings to the QCBAB an experienced understanding of the accommodation and food & beverage sectors (both for stand-alone businesses and chains) and their needs within this vital market segment. Jo has sat on this Advisory Board since inception and is keen to remain to ensure continuity.

Destination Queenstown

PO Box 353, Queenstown 9348, New Zealand
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Venues



Rachel Clifford

Event Sales Manager, RealNZ

Originally from Christchurch, Rachel has called Queenstown home for the past 17 years. With a varied background in hospitality, food & beverage, hotels, tourism, event management, and venue management, Rachel is keen to provide support in any way that she can to the Queenstown Business Event Community. Rachel has been on the QCB advisory board from its inception, but recently took a break to have her first child. Rachel is a committee member for the Queenstown Wedding Association, and is also a BEIA mentor. Rachel is passionate about all things events, and is interested in how she can support the business event industry. Rachel is currently the Event Sales Manager for RealNZ, managing the tourism portfolio of venues and attraction in the MICE market.

Activities (large)



Steve Bruce

Commercial Manager, Ngai Tahu Tourism

Steve joined Ngai Tahu Tourism, te whanau tapoi (tourism family) in January 2018 and as National Sales Manager oversees the sales teams across NTT's family of 14 businesses across Aotearoa/NZ. Steve provides strategic, people and commercial leadership to the teams for brands including Shotover Jet, Dart River Adventures, Dart Stables, Guided Walks NZ, Glacier Southern Lakes Helicopters in the Tahuna/Queenstown region. As well as a number of business outside the region such as Dark Sky Project (Takapo) and Franz Josef Glacier Guides. Steve lives in Queenstown with his wife Mariska and 2 sons, and is a proud Wakatipu Rugby Club man.

Activities (small and medium)



Sonja Painter

Managing Director, ThrillZone

Sonja is a passionate leader with 20 years' experience in global management roles. She has excellent entrepreneurial skills and a hands on leadership style that she exercises in her Queenstown based business. The Business located in Queenstown, otherwise known as Thrillzone has been developed by Sonja and her husband Francis. Over the last 8 years with humble beginnings, the business went from just a 12D Motion Theatre to a much larger operation with both indoor and outdoor entertainment. Thrillzone today is a destination with 12 different activities. Sonja encompasses what it means to be an entrepreneur and applies her in-depth understanding of small/medium business opportunities and challenges in Queenstown.

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DMCs



Sarah Dunan-Hale

Director and Creative Producer, QT Event Collective

A Sydney girl born-and-bred; Sarah was able to follow her passion producing events around the world for 16 years. In 2017 Sarah made the move to Queenstown and launched her corporate event and incentive business the QT Event Collective. A year later her second business was born, The Style Depot, specialising in wedding and special event styling. Maintaining client relationships with her Australian counterparts has been an integral part of the successful growth of business. Keeping in regular communications continues to provide key insights for overseas customers, including trends, technologies, and expectations. The domestic and incentive portfolio growth has exceeded targets, even throughout the difficult past two years. This unique insight having been a part of your target market sector and understanding offshore client needs, wants and expectations will continue to offer fresh and relevant perspectives for the QCB Advisory Board.



Rachael Simpson

General Manager, HQ New Zealand

Rachael provides a unique 'on the ground' perspective and insight into the Business Events Industry. Working in the heart of events in Queenstown, across all sectors, brings a breadth of knowledge and experience that will provide great insight for the QCB Advisory Board. Having held various roles with HQNZ, Totally Tourism and Magic Memories, Rachael has been involved across tourism and events for over 20 years and has been fortunate to not only build a network of like-minded people, but has watched the industry adapt, evolve, and grow over time, with plenty of learnings along the way. Her experience working with a vast range of clients and partners, provides a great understanding of not only expectations, but also potential future opportunities.

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