

## MELBOURNE'S FAVOURITE 'HOME AWAY FROM HOME' GETS AN UPGRADE

### All Seasons Victoria hotel to launch 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary history book with new look

One of Australia's most venerable hotels – the Victoria Hotel in Melbourne's Little Collins Street – is completing a makeover to catapult the historic 19<sup>th</sup> century hotel into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

While retaining its heritage and homely feel, the hotel will have a refreshing and contemporary look.

The first stage of the renovation involved the addition of a rooftop gym, swimming pool, sauna and spa complex offering guests views of the city while they work out.

All Heritage rooms have been repainted with new lighting and soft furnishings, while 90 of the rooms also have fully renovated bathrooms.

The hotel's South Wing is currently being completely gutted with the 90 'economy' rooms being replaced by 57 larger, modern rooms with ensuites, all modern technology, internet access, plasma TV screens, ducted airconditioning and completely new furnishings throughout.

The new-look rooms in the South Wing will start coming on line in April, at which time the Victoria Hotel's 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary history book *Home Away from Home* will be launched.

Function rooms have a new look, with attractive parquet flooring in the reception area, and Vic's bar, which has played host to many famous (and infamous) personalities over the 125 years has a complete new look, while remaining a discrete and welcoming oasis from Melbourne's busy city centre.

Many 'back of house' facilities that have been part of the hotel for decades have been upgraded including lifts, communications equipment and kitchen facilities.

The Victoria Hotel was established in 1880 by a former Premier of Victoria, James Munro. The hotel was originally known as the Victoria Coffee Palace, founded by a "temperance league" as an alternative ("dry" hotel) to the rowdy, bawdy pub accommodation on offer during the late 19th century.

At one stage, "The Vic", as it became known, was advertised as the largest hotel in the Commonwealth - today it remains the largest three star hotel in Australia.

The hotel was bought by the Schwartz Family Company in September 1998, and has been part of the Accor network since 2003.

The All Seasons Victoria Hotel General Manager, Peter Barker, said that the renovation had been a complicated task because the hotel was made up of a number of different buildings that had been consolidated over the years.

"It is a remarkable building with a remarkable history, and we had to balance the needs of guests who have been coming to the hotel and loving it as their 'home away from home' with the needs of contemporary travellers who require all the modern communications facilities and other services," he said.

"The emphasis will always be on providing a genuine and friendly atmosphere for our guests. They will now find it brighter, lighter and more comfortable.

"And the best way of ushering in a new era is by paying homage to the Victoria's rich and colourful history. The new book *Home Away from Home* will be like a history of Melbourne itself featuring some of the city's best known characters from Premiers through to corporate raider, the late Christopher Skase."

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