Conference Program

FESPA AUSTRALIA Conference 2026

Gus Balbontin

- Disrupt.
- Innovate.
- Lead.

Hosted By
Sam McCool

16th October 2026, Shangri-La Hotel, Sydney

Disrupt. Innovate. Lead.

8:45 – 9:15am
Arrival & Registration
Tea & coffee on arrival

9:15 – 9:30am
Welcome, Opening Remarks
Sam McCool, MC

Nigel Davies, President FESPA Australia

9:30 – 10:45am
Gus Balbontin

You don't watch this session. You do it! Working in small groups, the problems discussed on the table are the ones this industry actually shares. No Lego, no hypotheticals.

10:45 – 11:15am
Morning Tea

11:15am – 12:15pm
Innovation Lab
Andrew Butow

Solving Tomorrow's Problems Today

Expect an interactive and thought-provoking conversation that challenges assumptions, encourages participation and equips attendees with ideas they can take back to their organisations. Together, participants will debate, disrupt, and focus on navigating change, embracing opportunities and becoming truly future ready.

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12:15 – 12:45pm
Panel Session – facilitated by Bianca Martin
Cross generational panel

Sonya Beers, Karen Lawler, Nigel Spicer, Vincent Nair

What we see that the other side doesn't.

Are next gen leaders a threat, innovators or disruptors?

12:45 – 1:15pm
What makes a leader?
Carl Harman

A carefully curated session where you will be challenged to discuss what skills will matter in a decade of AI vs human leadership, what role does talent and culture play and how much courage will you need in your decision-making.

1:15 – 1:30pm
Fastest Fingers First
Sam McCool

A fun structured session where delegates exchange all the information gained from the morning session. Get ready, hands on buzzers!

1:30 – 1:45 pm
Closing Reflections & Conference End
Nigel Davies

1:45 – 3:00pm
Networking Lunch
A chance to discuss and network with fellow conference participants while enjoying lunch and drinks.

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Meet the Speakers

Sam McCool is your host for the day, a world-class emcee, comedian and writer.

Gus Balbontin is a former Executive Director and CTO of Lonely Planet, entrepreneur, investor, and advisor. With two decades of experience in digital transformation and disruption, he inspires audiences with engaging stories and insights on adapting to rapid change in business and technology

Sonya Beers is an experienced print professional with over 14 years' industry experience spanning customer service, account management and operations. Beginning at Offset Alpine Printing in 2011, she has successfully managed key client accounts through major business transitions. Sonya's strengths include communication, project delivery, problem-solving, collaboration and leadership development. Sonya is 2025 FESPA Leader.

Nigel Spicer is General Manager of Cactus Imaging, one of the Southern Hemisphere's largest grand-format digital printing companies. Since joining in 2008, he has led sales, marketing and business growth across Australia, New Zealand and Southeast Asia. Under his leadership, Cactus remains at the forefront of print technology.

Carl Harman is Principal at Imago Leadership and Co-Founder of CulturAlchemy, leveraging his executive experience to help Boards and leadership teams drive performance and transform culture through strategic development programs.

Nigel Davies is the President of FESPA Australia and founder of M-Power Software and VMG Print Group. With deep industry experience, he combines software solutions and leadership to drive positive change and support a stronger future for the sector.

Andrew Butow, co-founder of Earth2Mars, is a global expert in AI-driven change. He empowers leaders to navigate transformation, blending human-centred design and behavioural science to make complex technology accessible and drive meaningful, future-ready business outcomes

Karen Lawler is an accomplished Business Development Manager with Cactus Imaging, where she has built client relationships across media, advertising, retail, fashion and construction since 2017. Skilled in delivering grand-format print solutions, Karen is known for creativity, adaptability, problem-solving and attention to detail. She is NSW Patron for Women in Print and a 2025 FESPA Leader.

Vincent V. Nair is Executive Chairman and CEO of SMARTECH Business Systems and a board director across Asia Pacific. With expertise in governance, compliance, risk and financial oversight, he has transformed SMARTECH from loss-making to exceptional growth. Previously, Vincent held senior leadership roles with several Fortune 500 companies.