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Australian Charity Ball in Moscow Expects to Raise $100,000

By Peter Spinella

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Guests enjoying last year's Down Under Ball.

Peter Anderson, head of the Russian-Australian Business Association, started selling tickets for an Australia-themed charity ball on Tuesday. A day later, he had already sold 250 tickets, at $200 apiece.

He expects the second-annual Down Under Ball, on April 13 at the Renaissance Monarch hotel, to raise at least $100,000 for Big Brothers Big Sisters of Russia, a charity that helps disadvantaged children realize their potential through one-to-one mentorships.

With a recent $20,000 donation from consultancy Ernst & Young, as well as $10,000 from both law firm White & Case and Australia-based explosives maker Orica, it seems that Anderson's fundraising estimate is right on track.

"The Down Under Ball was conceived to help create a cohesiveness for the Australian and New

Zealand communities in Moscow as well as to raise money for this fantastic charity and cause," said Anderson, who is on Big Brothers Big Sisters of Russia's board of directors.

"The money we raise goes to paying salaries, etc., for the charity's staff who screen, train and then support the volunteers, so they can both give and get the most from the program," he said. "Because of the way our charity works, our annual report actually won us the government award for being one of the most transparent NGOs in Russia."

"Last year's ball was the biggest-ever fundraiser for Big Brothers Big Sisters of Russia," said Roman Sklotsky, the charity's executive director, adding that "$100,000 is an ambitious goal, but is achievable." He plans to put some of this year's funds to expanding the charity's reach beyond Moscow, including opening a branch in St. Petersburg.

The gala evening, set to bring together members of Moscow's Aussie and Kiwi community, including the Australian ambassador, will feature a raffle with a grand prize of two round-trip tickets to the Land Down Under.

The entertainment will include the Croupier rock band, whose repertoire suitably includes INXS tunes, Men at Work's classic "Down Under," as well as Australia's pseudo-anthem, "Waltzing Matilda." "We're also trying to get them to play some ACDC songs," Anderson added.

And there will be four-course meals, with 320 servings of prime Aussie beef donated by Meat & Livestock Australia, as well as wine and spirits by Australian brand Hardys.

"Last year, tickets sold out in 10 days," said Anderson, who also hosts a monthly meetup at The Hudson Bar, near metro Belorusskaya. "Everyone just comes along to meet other Aussies," he said.

To get a ticket to the Down Under Ball on April 13 or join the mailing list for The Hudson Bar meetups, e-mail the Russian-Australian Business Association at rabamoscow@gmail.com*.*

Contact the author at p.spinella@imedia.ru

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