Invest and they come

Duo battle Top End

Cameron Boon

The youth of Alice Springs really put on a show, but they didn’t do it in Darwin. Acoustic pair Eliahane — Mishah Bothell and Elise Lange — were competitors in the Battle of the School Bands on Friday and came away with the winning spot for solo or duo acts.

They will play at the Bassetthgrass festival, along with The Temper Trap, Boy & Bear, The Jezabels, Drapht, festival favourites The Hilltop Hoods and others, late next month.

The other Central Australian competitor in the Battle of the School Bands, The PostKruckles, performed admirably but didn’t come away with a prize.

While the Battle of the School Bands wrapped up on Friday afternoon, the Urban Quest competition was held at the Darwin Entertainment Centre on Sunday night.

Alice Springs girls Monique Chong, 10, and Olivia Allen, 11, sang to an audience of 1500 people, including judges Mark Holden, Deni Hines and Paul Costa.

Deni and Paul created their own special countdown award for Monique, who has been described as a “rapping sensation” and was announced as the second-place winner.

Sally Brooks

Alice Springs will be able to access to a new 70-seat theatre when the Royal Flying Doctor Service opens its 83rd visitor centre next month.

The brightly-painted facility on Stuart Terrace is also home to a full-scale, purpose-built replica of the current PC 12 Pilatus aircraft the RFDS operates in Central Australia.

RFDS General Manager Michael Toomey says the facility, funded by RFDS capital works projects, will host an estimated 70,000 visitors each year and will open on May 17.

Tourism Minister Michael Colbeck and Minister for Central Australia Karl Hampton yesterday toured the venue.

Minister McCarthy said, “It is great to see what is happening at the Royal Flying Doctor Service and the excitement that comes from knowing the building is locally designed and built.

“That is the sort of inspiration we need to encourage and keep encouraging businesses and visitors here to Central Australia.”

Amid declining tourism numbers to Alice Springs, Minister McCarthy said this month he had been spending $200,000 on a digital marketing campaign to raise the profile of Central Australia as a tourist destination.

The money is part of the $4.1 million package Red Centre Tourism campaign announced in February.

Minister Hampton said Central Australia is also becoming a noted destination for business events.

He said: “Alice Springs was voted Best Incentive Destination in a Reader’s Choice Award by the readers of m i c e n ert Australia magazine, a trade publication for the meetings and events industry.”

“This came after a familiarisation tour organised by our Convention Bureau to Alice of nine buyers of potential business events — from Australia, Canada, the Netherlands, Singapore and Thailand — so it has been a very successful investment.”

Heritage highlights

HERITAGE Week has only just begun but Festival Coordinator Laurel Hafeltz is already calling it a success.

While attending the Doreen Brutten Memorial Lecture on Sunday, Ms Hafeltz was surprised when the event ran into an unexpected hurdle.

“We had such a brilliant turnout of 130 people, we even ran out of seats!”

Another of Ms Hafeltz’s highlights was seeing the camel walking down Todd Mall on Saturday for the re-enactment of the 1914 Camel Patrol.

Planes get smaller

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Tiger Airlines Australia spokeswoman Vanessa Regan says the airline is still considering returning to Alice Springs.

She said: “The industry is highly competitive and we continually review and evolve our network based on a number of factors including demand. For that reason we never say never.

“Put very simply, if the destination fits with our business plan, we consider flying there.

“Alice Springs is on our radar, we just can’t confirm a definite timeframe for a return at this time.”