Local Facilities

SIGIR is located at the Sofitel Hotel, on Collins St between Exhibition St and Spring St. The conference venue is above the Collins Place indoor plaza at 45 Collins St. This leaflet describes the facilities available near the conference.

Dining

Coffee and snacks. Melbourne cafes compete for custom on the quality of their coffee—anywhere with an expresso machine and evidence of patronage is worth a visit.

Lunch. The Sofitel is at one end of Melbourne's extensive financial district—an area with a high density of dark suits and mobile phones, and quality dining to match. But eating around the Sofitel is nonetheless cheap, probably because of the large number of venues. The obvious place to eat is in Collins Place itself, where there is a wide variety of good food available. Similar food courts are at the Hyatt, one block down Collins St, near the corner with Russell St; and the quieter but less interesting Paramount complex, also one block away, on Bourke St near Exhibition St. Only slightly further afield (10–15 minutes walk) is Southgate, on the Yarra river. The ground floor of the Southgate complex has a large selection of cheap, good-quality food, and you can eat it by the Yarra.

If it is warm enough, get a take-away sandwich and head out to Treasury Gardens, just a few metres from the Sofitel at the corner of Collins St and Spring St. This park and the adjacent Fitzroy Gardens are a pleasure throughout the year.

Dinner. See the separately-provided list of nearby restaurants, based on our experience and on information provided in *The Age* "Good Food Guide" and *The Age* "Cheap Eats and Cafe Guide". These guides can be browsed at the reception desk. Both of these guides are widely available from bookshops and newsagents, at a fraction of the cost of a poorly-chosen meal.

If you want to eat well for less, head out of the city to either Lygon St or—our preference—Brunswick St. In both cases it is a reasonable walk (or short tram ride) to the best eateries, but well worth it. Lygon St cuisine is predominantly Italian. Most of the Lygon St cafes, about 1.5 km (15 minutes walk) from the Sofitel, serve good food and excellent coffee, and are generally better value than the pizza houses, which tend to be expensive for anything other than pizza. There are also several venues for gelati and ice-cream.

Some of Melbourne's best cheap restaurants are on Brunswick St in Fitzroy, about 2 km (20 minutes walk) north of the Sofitel. Most of the restaurants are between Moor St and Alexandra Parade, a stretch of around a kilometre. There are good restaurants from many cultures including Indian, African, Japanese, Thai, Malaysian, Spanish, Italian, Greek, French, Tibetan, Vietnamese, and of course Australian, as well as a wide range of cafes and Melbourne's best ice-cream parlour, Charmaine's.

Alternatively, go to Chinatown, on Little Bourke St from Swanston St Walk to Spring St. There are also some good venues on Bourke St in the area near Exhibition St. There are plenty of restaurants and cafes in the city or at Southgate, but prepare to pay a little more than in Fitzroy or Carlton, and check a dining guide before you set out.

Almost all restaurants are licensed to serve alcohol. Some are also BYO ("bring your own"). BYO restaurants allow you to bring wine purchased elsewhere. Some but not all BYO restaurants allow you to bring beer. Bottled wine or beer can be purchased at the bottle shop of most pubs; there is a larger selection at the Paramount supermarket and the Liquorland on Little Bourke St. Licensed-only restaurants do not allow you to bring alcohol.

Banks

Most of the major Australian banks have automatic tellers supporting Cirrus and the other international access facilities. Nearby branches with an automatic teller include:

- ANZ: at the entrance to Collins Place.
- Commonwealth: 77 Collins St.
- National: 71 Collins St.
- Westpac: 135 Collins St, at the corner of Russell St.

Bookshops

Inner Melbourne has several good general-purpose bookshops. The closest to the Sofitel are the Hill of Content and the Paperback Bookshop, both on Bourke St between Exhibition St and Spring St. The Lonsdale St end of Myers department store has a surprisingly good bookshop. Readers Feast underground at the corner of Bourke St and Swanston St Walk has a wide range. For academic books go to Technical Books on Swanston St Walk just north of Lonsdale St, or to McGills near the corner of Bourke St and Elisabeth St.

Carlton has several good bookshops in addition to the University of Melbourne campus bookshop (just to the south of the Student Union). The best is Readings on Lygon St, just north of Faraday St. For second-hand books, the best shop is the Carlton Secondhand Bookshop on Swanston St Walk near Grattan St. Book Affair, on Elgin St near Lygon St and, in the city, on Elizabeth St near Franklin St, is worth a visit. Other good bookshops include the Brunswick St Bookstore and Grub St Secondhand, also on Brunswick St.

Cinemas

One of Melbourne's several good arthouse cinemas, the Kino, is in Collins Place. There are two arthouse cinemas in Carlton, the Carlton Movie House on Faraday St and the Nova in Lygon Court. In central Melbourne, the mainstream Village and Greater Union theatres are both close to the corner of Bourke St and

Russell St. (Note that the seats at Greater Union can be uncomfortable for tall people. Avoid Hoyts, which has poor sound systems and is not very clean.)

Doctors

For information about the nearest general practice ask at the Sofitel main desk. For serious problems, go to St Vincents hospital on the corner of Nicholson St and Victoria Parade, a few minutes walk or tram ride north from the Sofitel.

Information

Maps, a street directory, dining guides, and phone books are kept at the conference reception desk. Attendees with a marked badge are locals who should be able to help you with most enquiries—look for badges stamped with a red kookaburra.

There are two excellent tourist information offices on Swanston St Walk, under the Town Hall: the Victorian Tourist Office and the Melbourne-specific City Experience Centre. These should be visited by anyone interested in seeing more of Melbourne or Victoria. Both these offices have a wide range of literature, from advertising for shopping and nightlife to material such as do-it-yourself walking tours of historic Melbourne. A small selection of the leaflets from these offices is included in your conference satchel.

Museums and Galleries

There is an extensive arts precinct on the south side of the Yarra beside Southgate, including the National Gallery of Victoria, the Performing Arts Museum, the State Theatre, and the State Opera. The Maritime Museum, featuring the restored tall ship Polly Woodside, is 10 minutes walk downriver from Southgate. Ferries run from Southgate to ScienceWorks, a science museum housed in and around the shell of a baroque sewage pumping station. In the city there are several small museums and galleries, in particular the Jewish Museum and the Chinese Museum. Sadly the State Museum is currently closed, as it is in transit to elaborate new premises in Carlton.

Pharmacies

There are several pharmacies, or chemists, near the Sofitel. The closest is in Collins Place. Go to a pharmacy for medication or cosmetics; go to a supermarket for other goods.

Post offices

There are several post offices in Melbourne. The General Post Office is the edifice with the clock tower on the corner of Bourke St and Elizabeth St.

Public transport

Melbourne public transport includes trams, trains, and buses. Most inner-city and near-city travel is by tram. Tram routes are shown on most maps. There is a Met information booth in the Bourke St Mall, between Swanston St Walk and Elizabeth St.

The free City Circle tram runs around the boundary of the CBD, along Spring St, La Trobe St, Spencer St, and Flinders St. A ride on one of these trams, which can be caught at 10-minute intervals, is a good way to see the different faces of Melbourne.

For other travel, some classes of ticket can be bought from machines on trams. Tickets are for travel in specified zones; almost all tram travel is in zone 1. The best value tickets are $2.20, which provides unlimited travel for two hours in zone 1, and $4.30, which provides unlimited travel all day in zone 1. Alternatively, a $1.60 short-trip one-way ticket will take you to destinations close to central Melbourne. A card of 10 short-trip tickets costs $12.50.

Near the Sofitel, tickets can be bought at the newsagency in Collins Place. Only the $1.60 and $2.20 tickets can be purchased on trams, and note that the on-board ticket machines do not accept notes.

Pubs and bars

There are now only a couple of good pubs in the Melbourne CBD, such as Young and Jackson's on the corner of Swanston St Walk and Flinders St, but there are many cafes and restaurants that have a bar. (Take the opportunity to sample some Australian beers and wines.) The cocktail lounge on the 35th floor of the Sofitel is worth a visit for the view from the floor-to-ceiling windows in the toilets.

Melbourne has many nightclubs, late-night cocktail bars, and other nightspots. More information is available from your hotel and the Tourist Office.

Shopping

There are three big shopping complexes in Melbourne. One is Melbourne Central, for which the simplest entrance is at the corner of Swanston St Walk and La Trobe St. The others are Australia on Collins and the Sportsgirl Centre on Collins St, which primarily consist of boutiques. Myers department store is best accessed from Bourke St. All of these are between Swanston St Walk and Elizabeth St (and have convoluted interior spaces).

Elizabeth St is notable for shopping. Melbourne has many covered shopping arcades; some, such as Block Arcade, date from the nineteenth century. A walking guide to the arcades is available from the Tourist Office.

Supermarkets

The nearest supermarket is under the Paramount complex, on Bourke St near Exhibition St. A good range of groceries is available in the basement of David Jones, on the south side of the Bourke St Mall. Coles Express on Elizabeth St between Flinders St and Flinders Lane is open 24 hours.

Worship

There are many inner city places of worship. The two largest are the Anglican-Episcopalian St Paul's Cathedral, opposite Flinders St Station, and the Roman Catholic St Patrick's Cathedral, north-east of Parliament. More information is available from your hotel and the Tourist Office.