

# The wearable device making major events possible

Ronald Mizen

When Melbourne event company Harry the Hirer found its entire calendar of work disappear in just seven days earlier this year, general manager of productions Simon Finlayson knew he needed to act fast.

"It was Grand Prix weekend when it all stopped," Mr Finlayson told *The Australian Financial Review*. "Many, many hundreds and hundreds of events we deliver each year, and that went down to zero in seven days."

But six months later, the company's development of a new "COVID wearable" has put it at the centre of efforts to relaunch the major events calendar – including potentially the Australian Open Tennis – in time for summer.

This has been helped along with the backing of one of world's leading infection prevention and control companies, Aspen Medical.

The disruption of COVID-19 focused the company's attention, Mr Finlayson said. "That sort of forced us to sit down and say, OK, what do we need to do here? How can we help businesses in our industry, return to work sooner?"

The result was the COVID Smart Badge, a wearable device that issues

social distancing alerts, conducts instant and automated contact tracing, and allows companies to monitor in real time the

number of people in a venue. Mr Finlayson said he hoped the device, which can be worn on the wrist or on a lanyard, would be a key part of bringing major events back to Australian cities by making contact tracing almost instantaneous.

"It was quite straightforward: Let's come up with a device that gives event managers and exhibition organisers, confidence to bring people back into their spaces, knowing that the technology will keep them apart," he said.

"We originally started to focus on how we could help business in the event and exhibition markets, and then people started showing interest from industry sectors we've never had any association with."

In a short space of time the COVID

Smart Badge attracted the attention of businesses from food processing and meat works, to construction, health and education. It also caught the eye of Aspen Medical founder Glenn Keys.

Aspen Medical has been at the forefront of Australia's COVID-19 response, including operating aged care emergency retrieval teams and being the largest supplier of medical equipment to the federal government.

The Canberra-based Aspen has also been tapped by major event managers to assist with biosecurity protocols. Mr Keys said the company found the COVID Smart Badge after a global search for a technology solution.

"We said if the economy is going to kick-start again ... we've got to find ways to make it work with COVID," he said. "So, we started to put together a suite of services that our customers were asking for, like Tennis Australia.

"We spoke to Simon and the team at Harry the Hirer and one of the things that really hit us, was their culture is very similar to ours. We've got very similar cultures, it's very can do."

Within weeks Aspen Medical had signed-on to be the exclusive distributor of the COVID Smart Badge.

Mr Finlayson said the company was now producing tens of thousands of badges every month ready for the summer.



The COVID Smart Badge conducts instant contact tracing.