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DECEMBER 2021/JANUARY 2022

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Image bottom right: Richard Fain steps down as Royal Caribbean Group CEO

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The pandemic has drastically changed life as we once knew it. While it's too early to predict how long the nasty imprint of COVID will last on the souls of humans, what is clear is that there will be changes in the way many people do business, and the travel sector is no exception. Adam Bishop investigates what will stay, and what will change in how the travel industry functions in a post-pandemic world.

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From the publisher **Bruce Piper**



THE truism "there's always someone worse off than you" is usually cold comfort, but incredibly has this month become true for the bludgeoned Australian tourism industry. We may be beaten and battered, but spare a thought

for our Kiwi cousins who have been told it will be at least another five months until they are able to welcome any international visitors. While her empathetic

approach to several pre-COVID crises garnered strong overseas support for New Zealand Prime MInister Jacinda Ardern, the situation seems to not be so rosy for her at home where a rising tide of anger at her increasingly incomprehensible isolationist policies has left the industry in despair.

We may be frustrated at the haphazard way Australia's reopening plan is progressing, but it must be said we are streets ahead of the situation across the Tasman, where Ardern has responded to industry pleas for certainty by announcing that international tourists - including Aussies - will not be welcome in NZ until May!

Not only that, they will then have to spend seven days in self-isolation before being able to begin their NZ holiday.

NSW Terms & Conditions push

NSW Government over the development of

a new information standard, aiming to help

consumers easily understand their rights if

they need to cancel or defer travel. Under

the initiative, key terms and conditions of

specifying what happens in the event of

contracts are required to be laid out, explicitly

AFTA has been working closely with the

This mind-boggling policy confirms the a clear anti-tourism and anti-growth stance of Ardern and her cronies, who have also decided that now is the perfect time to increase border levies.

Talk about kicking an industry - which by the way is a mainstay of the Kiwi economy - while it's down! And to add insult to injury, the reopening plan leaves the country's formerly vibrant tourism sector in limbo, by allowing fully vaccinated Kiwis to leave the country and return from Australia without quarantine from 16 January, and then from anywhere else in the world from 13 February.

As several commentators have noted in recent days, that is certain to mean that domestic travel, which until now had been somewhat supported by strong local demand from New Zealanders keen for a holiday after being locked up for so long, is once again being left out in the cold, because anyone with an itch to travel will be out of there like a flash - with no corresponding inbound visitation to fill the gap.

You have to feel sorry for anyone trying to promote Kiwi tourism, because with policies like this it must be like trying to fight a boxing match with one hand tied behind your back.

cancellations, refunds and credits, processing fees and any other important exclusions.

NSW Minister for Better Regulation, Kevin Anderson, noted ongoing collaboration with the Australian Federation of Travel Agents and other key industry players, with an associated 'Look Before You Book' campaign to remind consumers to carefully consider the terms and conditions when making travel plans.

"The campaign includes a simple checklist

that will help consumers plan their next holiday and ensure they are aware of their rights, especially when travel services have been cancelled, and what they need to consider before booking their next trip," Anderson said.

McGrath to Crown

ACCOR Australasia will see the end of an era next February, when the hotelier's long-time CEO Simon McGrath as the new Crown Resorts Group Head of Hospitality and CEO of Crown Sydney.

McGrath currently has responsibility for almost 400 hotels across the Asia-Pacific region, with 18,000 staff. with his new role including the Crown Towers Sydney hotel with 349 rooms, luxury residences, retail outlets, pool, spa and conferencing facilities as well as an array of premium restaurants.

As Group Head of Hospitality at Crown he will "play a strategic advisory and leadership role," covering all three Crown Resorts properties in Melbourne, Sydney and Perth, with Crown Resorts MD Steve McCann saying "we are pleased to have attracted such a respected industry leader to Crown".

Webjet agent tech buy

WEBJET has confirmed the acquisition of Canadian travel tech startup Trip Ninja, adding it plans to use the technology exclusively in the Asia-Pacific region to enhance the offerings in its local online travel agency business.

Trip Ninja, which actually



THE Scenic Group formally debuted its Emerald Cruises brand in Australia last month, in the lead-up to the launch of *Emerald Azzurra*, the brand's first superyacht which is set to being cruising in early 2022. The vessel recently completed her sea trials after a hand-over from the Ha Long Bay, Vietnam shipyard where sister ship Emerald Sakara had her keel laid early in November. Azzurra will cruise the Mediterannean, Adriatic and Red Seas, while Sakara will be deployed on the Black Sea and Indian Ocean itineraries once she joins the collection in 2023. **Pictured** at the launch event are Creative Cruising's Carina Mullins, Emerald Cruises' Emma Davie, and Julie Jones from First Class Travel.

66

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??

Steve McCann,

Managing

Director,

Crown Resorts

Crown

went into hiatus during the early stages of the pandemic, will now relaunch operations with Webjet's backing, implementing its multi-city flight search technology to "show the consumer pricing options what could only ever be surfaced manually by a very experienced travel agent". Trip Ninja's FareStructure product automates the combination of fares from carriers without a codeshare deal, while FlexTrip reorders a multi-stop itinerary to deliver a better price. Pricing comparisons

IN

BRIEF

conducted by Webjet using Trip Ninja's technology had shown "material price reductions," according to Webjet CEO John Guscic, who said "we believe it will play a key role in helping grow our share of the international flights market".

NTIA to return

THE National Travel Industry Awards will once again take place in 2022 after a two-year hiatus, AFTA has confirmed, with the event now scheduled for 15

Continues over page

Continues from previous page

October 2022. AFTA CEO Dean Long said the event would have "a new approach bringing a strong focus on our people and businesses".

The gala night will take place at Sydney's International Convention Centre, with Long adding that "it's important we come together to celebrate and acknowledge the innovation, determination and resilience of our people and our sector". He said the redesigned NTIA would be finalised in the coming months with "extremely positive feedback" already from members, industry partners and the AFTA Board.

QF loyalty push

OANTAS has been working hard on its Qantas Frequent Flyer program to maintain engagement despite low levels of flying during the pandemic, and last



move is a world first, with members required to complete at least five sustainable activities across six areas - flying, travel, lifestyle, sustainable purchases, reducing impact and giving back - each year to achieve Green tier status.

The initiative followed the formal commencement of an agreement with Accor which sees members of the Qantas and Accor loyalty programs able to

66 AFTA is

pleased to confirm that NTIA will be back on 15 October 2022 with a new approach bringing a strong focus on our people and businesses

> **99** Dean Long, CEO. AFTA

"double up" on points earning in both programs simultaneously for flights and hotel stays.

Virgin all on deck

VIRGIN Australia has returned all of its stooddown workers as well as launched a recruitment drive for 600 more staff. as it strives to maintain a 33% share of the domestic market within Australia.

CEO Jayne Hrdlicka also announced the expansion of the VA fleet with seven additional Boeing 737s, telling staff that having a one-third market share "enables us to continue to deliver the right mix of destinations with high frequency to support both our business and leisure guests".

She noted the addition of 12 new domestic VA routes since September, as well as the pending restart of flights to Fiji, Bali and New Zealand.

MD

DATA ROOM

MAIN DOMESTIC ROUTES

City pair	Passengers YE Sep 20 (000)	Passengers YE Sep 21 (000)	% change
Brisbane-Cairns	823.7	972.0	+18.0
Brisbane-Townsville	614.7	668.2	+8.7
Brisbane-Mackay	482.7	514.3	+6.5
Adelaide-Brisbane	497.6	432.8	-13.0
Karratha-Perth	302.6	395.9	+30.8
Broome-Perth	216.7	361.9	+67.0
Brisbane-Rockhampton	315.5	346.9	+10.0
Perth-Port Hedland	241.7	322.0	+33.2
Newman-Perth	200.3	292.7	+46.1
Brisbane-Darwin	187.1	259.6	+38.8
ALL CITY PAIRS	31,411.1	22,602.6	-28.0

Sep 2019	Sep 2020	Sep 2021	change - original Aug 21/ Sep 21
80	0	470	+240
41,300	430	380	-160
1,880	170	360	-410
32,020	210	310	-80
36,260	190	310	-50
850	0	300	+180
15,760	60	290	+200
48,380	610	230	-160
12,580	170	210	0
98,990	200	130	-140
694.960	3.710	4.410	-1,830
	2019 80 41,300 1,880 32,020 36,260 850 15,760 48,380 12,580 98,990	2019 2020 80 0 41,300 430 1,880 170 32,020 210 36,260 190 850 0 15,760 660 48,380 610 12,580 170 98,990 200	2019 2020 2021 80 0 470 41,300 430 380 1,880 170 360 32,020 210 310 36,260 190 310 36,260 0 300 15,760 60 290 48,380 610 230 12,580 170 210 98,990 200 130

DOMESTIC AIR MARKET September 2021

	Sep 20	Sep 21	Growth %	Year end Sep 20	Year end Sep 21	Growth %
Total pax carried	0.70m	0.99m	+42.1	31.41m	22.60m	-28.0
Revenue pax km (RPK)	0.80bn	1.27bn	+59.6	36.29bn	26.41bn	-27.2
Available seat kms (ASK)	1.42bn	2.32bn	+63.1	47.80bn	42.26bn	-11.6
Load factor (%)	56.1	54.9	-1.2*	75.9	62.5	-13.4*
Aircraft trips (000)	16.0	20.7	+28.7	374.2	348.4	-6.9
	*Percentage points difference					
				374.2	348.4	-6

Source: BITRE

INTERNATIONAL AIR MARKET SHARE

Share of passengers carried - September 2021



Source: BITRE



01 Nov	Singapore gets the nod
02 Nov	TGA ticks more vaccines
03 Nov	More value for QF loyalty
04 Nov	Hawaii drops restrictions
04 Nov	Costsaver launches in Oz
05 Nov	Give the gift of travel
06 Nov	Australia reaches 80% double vaccination
08 Nov	AFTA confirms NTIAs for 2022
08 Nov	Bid cleared for take-off
09 Nov	McGrath leaves Accor

09 Nov	Siteminder floats on ASX
11 Nov	Savenio revamps model
12 Nov	nib reboots insurance
15 Nov	\$1.8b JobKeeper for industry
17 Nov	FCTG appoints new global leisure
18 Nov	VA to add seven 737s to fleet
19 Nov	Travelex eyes growth plan
22 Nov	TravelPay rewards agents
22 Nov	QF announces MEL-DEL
23 Nov	Youth tourism to return

VISITOR ARRIVALS

RESIDENT RETURNS Top 10 destinations, September 2021 Top 10 destinations, September 2021

Country of stay	Sep 2019	Sep 2020	Sep 2021	change - original Aug 21/ Sep 21
USA	95,180	750	870	+270
UK	73,830	1,080	590	+30
Japan	30,860	130	500	-690
PNG	8,060	390	350	+40
India	22,950	440	250	-160
New Zealand	110,950	940	230	-4,040
China	46,650	500	220	-30
Pakistan	2,220	70	190	+70
Unit Arab Emir	4,310	170	140	+60
France	16,460	120	120	+50
All resident returns	992,820	8,170	6,020	-4,290

Source: ABS



INTERNATIONAL AIR ROUTES Top 10 city pairs, year end September 2021

City pair	Passengers YE Sep 20	Passengers YE Sep 21	% of total	% change 21/20
Auckland-Sydney	814,833	124,382	10.6	-84.7
Auckland-Brisbane	463,535	100,652	8.6	-78.3
Auckland-Melbourne	641,358	90,358	7.7	-85.9
Los Angeles-Sydney	439,273	42,476	3.6	-90.3
Singapore-Sydney	730,119	41,262	3.5	-94.3
Auckland-Gold Coast	158,704	39,613	3.4	-75.0
Doha-Sydney	301,649	33,371	2.9	-88.9
Auckland-Perth	101,260	30,280	2.6	-70.1
Singapore-Brisbane	447,950	29,488	2.5	-93.4
Singapore-Perth	571,325	27,221	2.3	-95.2
Top 10 City Pairs	4,670,006	559,103	47.9	-88.0
Other City Pairs	15,468,969	608,980	52.1	-96.1
ALL CITY PAIRS	20,138,975	1,168,083	100.0	-94.2

Source: BITRE

SITEMINDER BUOYED BY IPO

THE stocks of Sydney-based tech company SiteMinder continue to grow, last month revelling in an oversubscribed Initial Public Offering on the ASX.

The enthusiasm for the hotel commerce platform's floatation delivered the company \$627 million in new capital, with notable investors including AustralianSuper, Ellerston Capital, Fidelity International and Pendal Group.

Servicing the hotel sector with a range of digital services such as channel management, transactions, website building and booking

66 ...its current growth trajectory is to some degree attributable to hotels needing to transform digitally faster than they ever have before engine optimisation, SiteMinder CEO Sankar Narayan believes its current growth trajectory is to some degree attributable to hotels needing to transform digitally faster than they ever have before.

"The need for technology like SiteMinder's hotel commerce platform is of substantial relevance as hotels have had to digitally transform with haste [during the pandemic], while adjusting to their customers' changing needs and behaviours," he said. Listing under the ticker code "SDR", SiteMinder's

shares were offered at \$5.06 each at the IPO, raising its overall market capitalisation to \$1.36 billion and positioning the business to pursue further expansion activities in what is describes as "the large, unpenetrated hotel market of more than one million accommodation providers".

The business has enjoyed a strong financial performance in recent times, recording a total revenue of \$101 million for the full financial year 2021, representing 32,000 hotels across 150 countries - the majority of which are outside of the Asia Pacific.



AFTA VIEW Dean Long, Chief Executive Officer, Australian Federation of Travel Agents

I CAN'T tell you how many times I have rewritten this column this month. Each and every time I thought I was finally in a position to put it to bed, something else would happen.

The news that Omicron is here is not unexpected but it is extremely disappointing to be back on the border closure rollercoaster again. The cumulative effect of border closures and travel restrictions both here in Australia and right around the world continues to kneecap client confidence.

Our focus at AFTA over the past six months has been to reinforce the critical need for ongoing support for our sector until at least the middle of next year. As the Federal Government moved into its election mode, we needed to be confident that our final push for support from this Government was targeted appropriately within their policy priorities.

We have continued to engage regularly with Tourism Minister Dan Tehan and, importantly, Chair Tom Manwaring and I recently met with Deputy Prime Minister Barnaby Joyce and a number of other key National MPs including Member for Cowper Pat Conaghan who has been and remains one of the biggest supporters of travel agents.

It is now clear that sector support is no longer the preferred approach by the Government, and this unfortunately includes Round 3. The Government's primary focus is revitalising the Australian economy through skills and workforce development. We must pivot to advocate on this issue and ensure the Travel Sector receives additional support.

This month had already seen our advocacy widen to include this focus. The ongoing development of the skills along with the urgent need to attract and retain people in Travel is a critical conversation already underway with Government.

Our ask is for a support package of an additional \$130M plus any remaining funds which we understand is around \$60M from the COVID-19 Consumer Travel Support Grant program. Our focus will be funding for a skills retention and attraction package to deliver to ensure the Sector has the skills employees it requires. We have issued an updated member toolkit to help our members help us in this push for support.



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ISSUES & TRENDS



In honour of the "Still Standing" theme of the night, Liz Ellis and Monique Monsees from Cherrybrook Travel brought along their own Elton John glasses, and Business Publishing Group publisher Bruce Piper was more than happy to join in the fun.



Gareth Evison from Cruise1st, Norwegian Cruise Line's Damian Borg, Lance Dye of Carnival Cruise Line and Andrew Best from Hawaiian Airlines,







The irrepressible Viking team of Ethan Larkin, Ramon Drew, Keira Smith, Michelle Black, Julie de Palo, Jane Moggridge and Lee Siefken.

WE'RE STILL STANDING!

THE Australian travel industry shook off the cares, concerns and cobwebs of the last 20 months on 30th November with a gala gathering in Sydney for the first ever Travel Daily "Still Standing Celebration".

Almost 400 travel agents, suppliers and industry stakeholders took part in the highly anticipated event - many travelling from interstate where border restrictions permitted - which was able to take place thanks to the generous support of key sponsors including CVFR Consolidation Services, the Globus Family of Brands, Norwegian Cruise Line, Celebrity Cruises, Regent Seven Seas Cruises, Oceania

Cruises, Scenic Luxury Cruses & Tours and Viking Cruises.

Although all of the sponsors were a vital part of the night's success, special mention should go to Viking Cruises which as well as bringing along some of their very own Norse warriors awarded lucky door prizes not just to the travel advisors present, but also a \$1,000 gift card to a supplier "because usually suppliers don't get to win anything".

It was the first opportunity to get together since the start of the pandemic, and revellers eagerly embraced the moment, commiserating, congratulating and celebrating the industry's indomitable spirit.



Stan Scott from Helloworld Travel Limited with the Scenic team of Anthony Laver, Emma Davie and Liz Brumpton.



Ram Chhabra from CVFR Travel Group gave an inspiring, thoughtful speech to encourage the industry.

Cruises crew clearly pulled event: Lillian Canedo, the Ferguson.



The Princess out all stops to glam up for the dapper Julian De Carlo, Chloe Jones and Nick



Megan Catterall from iTravel, Donna Sheather from iTravel and Karen Robinson from

MTA Travel.

VA READIES FOR **TAKE-OFF**

AFTER a bleak two years for the brand, Virgin Australia was finally able to inform the market about some positive news last month, announcing that all of its staff would be stood back up from 01 December as it prepares for a major upswing in air travel.

On top of the retained staff, VA also revealed it is currently on the hunt for an extra 600 roles across the business, as the airline locks its sights on retaining at least 33% of the domestic market share.

One year on from being bought by private equity company Bain Capital, VA is now looking to ramp up its capacity to compete with rival Qantas, detailing plans to purchase seven Boeing 737NG aircraft in line with a broader growth strategy to significantly increase its 737 fleet.

"This fleet growth underlines the confidence have in the future of our business and the industry generally, VA CEO Jayne Hrdlicka said, adding that its outlook is being spurred on by rising vaccination rates, borders reopening and demand for air travel returning.

Virgin will resume short-haul international services from this month, starting with Fiji on 16 December and followed by Bali and New Zealand after that.





CATO VIEW Brett Jardine, Managing Director, Council of Australian Tour Operators

THE last 18-months have been extremely challenging for all of us. Whilst difficult, this time has allowed CATO to reflect on the needs of the land-supply sector which will ensure a sustainable future focused on supporting customers and our travel agent partners.

The land-supply sector is the lifeblood of the Australian domestic and outbound leisure market, with CATO members being the organisations that take the risk to invest in, develop and distribute guality product that enables Australians to travel safely around the world. With this in mind, our advocacy efforts in lobbying government continue, and will remain as a priority to ensure our members are here for the long-haul.

With green shoots of excitement now emerging around leisure travel, we are hearing reports of a new breed of customer, that has typically made their own leisure travel arrangements, now seeking the guidance and support of experts that are based here in Australia. CATO members, with the support of travel agents are well placed to provide consumers with first-hand knowledge and guidance from destinations around the world and encourage a "keep-it-local" approach by supporting Australian businesses as we re-build our industry.

As consumer confidence returns, there has been (and will continue to be) a renewed focus on booking terms and conditions as travellers seek a greater level of comfort before handing over their savings for future travel arrangements. At the onset of COVID there was a heavy focus on T&Cs from government (ACCC) and it was clear a greater level of consistency was required from organisations within our membership group.

With this in mind, CATO completed the rollout of our Industry Standard Booking Terms and Conditions (T&C's) last year, that the majority of members have now adopted. We recently finalised an update to these T&Cs based on further learnings and expectations aligned with Australian Consumer Law. Coupled with expertise from our legal partner and travel law specialist, this has ensured CATO members now have a greater knowledge and understanding of their legal responsibilities.

PCR TEST EARNINGS





Blue Powder founder Michael Cohen

TRAVEL agents have the chance to earn commissions on their clients' PCR tests through a new division of Blue Powder Travel.

Called Covid Test, the service allows travel advisors to sign up online and be provided with a booking number for a COVID test appointment which can be easily sent through to clients. Testing can take the form of drive-through clinics, priced from \$115 per person, or alternatively travellers can choose the option of home delivery with a fully certified pathology collector kit, ranging from between \$145 and \$198 per person.

While there are other COVID testing providers on the market, Blue Powder's founder Michael Cohen said his service caters specifically to the needs of travel agents.

"Our company specialises in testing for travel purposes only, meaning we are focused on ensuring customers and travel agents get the right test at the right time with confidence and reassurance to travel internationally," Cohen explained.

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Agent commissions will be received within two weeks of processing the booking, while the results of the test are also speedy for clients and are provided via email within 24 hours of taking the test.

At this stage the service is only offered in Sydney, Newcastle, Melbourne and regional Victoria, with Blue Powder Travel revealing intentions to expand to Brisbane before the end of the year and other Aussie cities as flights increase in the future.

For registration and eligibility visit

TRAVELEX READY TO REFUND

FEW industry verticals have been more adversely impacted by the pandemic than travel-focused currency exchange companies.

The story for Travelex is no different, with the company's sales plummeting to meagre volumes during the global travel shutdown and collapsing into administration in August last year.

However, under a restructured ownership model things are looking much brighter for Travelex, with the company's Managing Director for Australia and New Zealand Darren Brown telling travelBulletin that the business is poised to take advantage of a wave of travel confidence, and it has its eyes firmly set on the Australian market.

"We plan to expand in a very prudent and constructive manner but we are talking with our partners like Helloworld in Australia about how we can strengthen that partnership for expansion," he said.

"We are also talking to Australia Post...they have over 3,000

locations so the question is how do we power more Australia Post services," Brown added.

While the company's standalone stores have taken a hit globally, Brown said that in Australia it would be examining ways to grow its physical footprint as well in areas like airports and shopping centres to take advantage of the predicted upswing in traveller demand.

"Where we see a gap in the market, we want to be there to fill it – both online and offline," Brown confirmed.

Another focus for the company will be to innovate in the digital sphere, with the first manifestation of that effort to result in new click and collect services for Australian travellers rolling out in 2022, allowing customers to order

currency online and pick up from one its many ATM locations in Australia. Another exciting

area of focus for

Travelex will be investing in crypto currency services, with Australia selected as a key experimental market to launch new products.

"It's a very relevant conversation that's actually happening right now, in Australia we have received board approval to explore crypto currency... so we're now actually actively speaking with partners about how it can be part of Travelex," Brown said.

"There's a lot to learn and we want to try and make it as easy as possible for consumers to understand and how the trade can work and I believe this is just the start of what will become business as usual for Travelex and become part of the digital wallet," he added.



We have your back

WITH plans going awry while travelling the unfortunate theme of the last two years, many in the travel sector are relieved to see more company's starting to take the concept of cancelled plans more seriously.

One new player in this space is an Aussie business called Cancellation Covered, offering ticket insurance to travellers in the event of encountering bad luck like illness or injury. Backed by Cover-More Insurance Group, Cancellation Covered GM Chris Weide believes insurance products such as his will

help instil greater confidence in travellers, many of whom are still suffering the psychological wounds of the pandemic.

"It gives operators a revenue stream so they can collect a commission on selling the policy and it also gives customers purchase-confidence by knowing that if something does happen to them... they can claim and get their money back," he said.

Cancellation Covered costs 1.5% of the ticket price and covers a range of travel experiences such as attractions, festivals and sporting events.





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THE NEW DIGITAL JOURNEY

TRAVELLERS arriving into Australia from this month will be the first to experience the country's new **Digital Passenger Declaration** (DPD), an innovative government platform which aims to provide a single source of data to smooth the inbound journey.

The initial phase of the program was unveiled to AFTA members during a webinar last month, with an Australian Border Force spokesperson confirming the system would replace the incoming passenger cards currently required to be completed in-flight by all incoming passengers.

The system is not mandatory, but will help simplify the collection and dissemination of passenger data, which is currently used in various forms by about 50 government organisations.

The DPD application will be available on a website as well as via a smartphone app on both iOS and Android platforms, with the app version having the ability to automatically populate fields by reading the chip in ePassports.

A "liveness test" is incorporated to ensure the app is being used

by a real person and to avoid attempts to defraud the system.

The first version of the DPD will come into use this month, and will replace the Australian Travel Declaration which was introduced recently to collect data on the COVID-19 vaccination status of incoming passengers.

Adults will be able to add children to their DPD, and the first time it is used, the app will enable the saving of vaccination and profile information for reuse on future trips.

Initially the details of an approved DPD will have to be shown to check-in staff, but a further upgrade scheduled for March aims to integrate the sending of passenger health and vaccination status directly to airline departure control systems.

Border Force plans to deploy additional liaison staff at key airports around the world to facilitate the rollout of the DPD, while various options are being considered for checking by exit marshals in airport arrival halls, including printing a QR code on SmartGate tickets.

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NTERRITOR

SUMMERSALE

WORLD MENTAL HEALTH DAY AND SELF CARE

By Tim Hoopmann



Health Day – 10 October – was a day for global mental health education. awareness.

and advocacy. It challenges perceptions about mental illness and encourages everyone to look at mental health in a more positive light.

1 in 5 Australians are affected by mental illness annually, yet many don't seek help because of stigma. Self-care is any activity that we do deliberately in order to take care of our mental, emotional, and physical health. Good self-care is key to improved mood and reduces stress.

It is key to a good relationship with self and others.

WHERE DO YOU BEGIN?

- 1. Stick to the basics. Focus on activities that work for you. Get these right and you are off to a great start.
- 2. It needs to be something you actively plan and not something that just happens. Make a plan, write it down, block time in your calendar. Stay focused.
- 3. Keep an open mind, believe that the activities you choose will help you take care of your mental health. Focus on the outcomes.

Everyone manages stress in different ways and it's important to be aware of this. One solution does not fit everyone. It is important to seek out what works for you.

A GOOD NIGHTS SLEEP

- · 8 hrs work best for me, and I wake refreshed.
- Winding down prior to sleep by disconnecting from my tech devises has a positive impact on my sleep

EXERCISE IN THE AM

- · This energises me for the day and helps make me more resilient to what is coming my way

USE POSITIVE WORDS

- I always get a much better response when I start with a positive
- Positive words create positive energy for me. Then I find those around me then react more constructively

SET A START & END TIME EACH DAY

• Staying late doesn't give me time to relax and unwind



NT Summer Sale. Sell more, win more. 15 prize packages to the NT valued at \$5,000 each up for grabs*



* T&C's apply

It sets up my day for success

 Setting boundaries around my work time keeps me focused

SHARE

- · This really helps me to offload and talk about issues
- · I find having a mentor or coach is a great benefit and allows me to share with them and this lessens the burden on family or friends

SPEND TIME WITH YOUR LOVED ONES

- The most important part of my everyday
- Spending time together makes life worthwhile

IT MIGHT seem hard to focus on mental health and wellbeing at this time but prioritising this is more important than ever. Every day it is important to take time to reflect on yourself. Think about how you are feeling and if there are things you could do differently to take care of your wellbeing.

Ask for help early and remember you are not alone.

The pandemic has changed many aspects of life for people. Some of us have reported feeling traumatised by incessant lockdowns, more fearful of crowded spaces and showing more concern for the cleanliness of the places we visit. While it's too early to predict how long the nasty imprint of COVID will last on the souls of humans, what is clear is that at least in the short-term future, there will be changes in the way many people do business, and the travel sector is no exception. ADAM BISHOP investigates.

he travel sector has in no way escaped upheaval from the pandemic, in fact, some argue it has been at the coalface of the COVID-related turbulence, with the movement of people brought to a

virtual standstill. But with travel finally starting to ramp up again and vaccination rates in many parts of the world inching us closer to herd immunity, the question of how the sector will evolve as a consequence of the prolonged shutdown looms large in the minds of people left to pick up the pieces from the once-in-a-century health disaster.



Vaccination against COVID-19 has made a way forward for travel.

For travel agents in particular, the impact of COVID was both immediate and disastrous. Many worked around the clock to deliver refunds for scuttled travel plans, often dipping into their own cash reserves to look after clients while money was tied up downstream with suppliers. And while there was much written by experts during the last two years about the apocalyptic future of advisors, the weeping and gnashing of teeth has started to subside in the face of a resurgent traveller-need for expertise, as restrictions start to roll back in a complicated and piecemeal fashion.

The evolving situation represents a big opportunity for agents to make up ground, TravelManagers Chairman Barry Mayo believes, with travellers now more acutely aware of how plans can go wrong when they decide to plan trips off their own bat.

"A consequence of the pandemic is that there is a much greater awareness among many travellers of the importance of having a travel expert working behind the

scenes to ensure that their travel arrangements are well thought out and will run smoothly, and that they will have all the support they need if things do go wrong," Mayo said, adding that clients will be really looking to agents for their knowledge on each country's health requirements to provide them with confidence in their ability to travel safely.

"With constantly moving goalposts, clients will want to be reassured that they are ahead of the game and won't face any nasty surprises along the way - this can provide a real point-of-difference with OTAs and booking directly with airlines online," Mayo added.

The view is similar at Flight Centre, which has spent the last couple of months talking up the need for travel experts in the dynamic COVID environment overseas – particularly through its newly-created "There's nowhere we haven't been tagline".

"Travel agents need to be across a lot more information about health requirements in the post-COVID era of travel, different

66 With constantly moving goalposts. clients will want to be reassured that they are ahead of the game and won't face any nasty surprises along the way - this can provide a real pointof-difference with OTAs and booking directly with airlines online 99

from accommodation and flights to COVID testing and quarantine requirements.

Barry Mayo, Chairman, **TravelManagers**

countries are issuing ever-changing rules about such things as vaccine certification, PCR testing, and mandatory health insurance, making travel planning a minefield for people to navigate," the company's General Manager Kelly Spencer explains.

- 200

"That is why having a travel agent by their side has become so important, we've made it a priority to become experts in this stuff and go to great lengths to stay up-todate so we can decipher it all for our customers."

Spencer also points out that this need for advice is starting to have an impact in the all-important millennial demographic, a segment that has historically opted to organise travel online without the help of an agent.

Meanwhile most suppliers are also predicting that travel agents will play an increasingly important role in the rebuild of the travel industry as a whole, with the Council of Australian Tour Operators (CATO) suggesting advisors will possess a "stronger drive" now more than ever to demonstrate their has shifted who travel agents

Navigating the requirements of travel in this new world is more difficult than ever for consumers, making the role of the travel agent more vital than ever.

expertise with clients.

"The role of travel agents will be key to suppliers rebuilding following the pandemic as an important channel to ensure travellers are well informed about the health. safety and entry processes for each country visited. Consumers will rely heavily on travel agents for this information and travel agents will lean on suppliers for the most up-to-date and relevant details in this everchanging landscape," CATO told travelBulletin. "As the pandemic has evolved and many travellers have been impacted by COVID, there has

been an evident shift in travel agents ensuring they are fully abreast of their suppliers' terms and conditions, should travel be disrupted. Suppliers vary with how they do business, and hence travel agents are now being more mindful of who they work with. The pandemic has set operators apart, determining which ones have a strong trade focus and trade ethics to those who are consumerdriven. This is a key change which



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Travel agents need to be across a lot more information about health requirements in the post-COVID era of travel, different countries are issuing everchanging rules about such things as vaccine certification, PCR testing, and mandatory health insurance, making travel planning a minefield for people to navigate **99**

Kelly Spencer, General Manager, Flight Centre

COVER

choose to support and why," the group added.

APT Travel Group is at least one operator which agrees with this sentiment, moving forward its business model to align even closer to the trade following the fallout of COVID, labelling its relationship to advisors as "critically important" in its quest to rebound from the pandemic.

"Combining our resourcing and expertise is the only way to service our valued guests and we expect travel agents will be in high demand and appreciate the new complexity to consulting, so we are focussed on providing the support required to position our partners as experts," the company's General Manager of Sales Scott Ellis said.

Navigating the requirements of travel in this new world is more difficult than ever for consumers, making the role of the travel agent more vital than ever."Whilst the core of our partnership and sales strategy will be focussed on driving new business through agents' doors, we also need to focus on converting the enquiry. In-store, virtual and our suite of pre-recorded content are focussed on providing agents with the knowledge required to convert all enquiries. We are proud to have maintained a 20-strong sales team who are all ecstatic to be aligning with our key partners driving sales," Ellis added.

While the demand for agent expertise in the post-COVID era looks to be showing strong life signs, the picture is far more mixed when it comes to the relationship between airlines and the trade, especially after Qantas announced back in May that it would be reducing base commissions on international flights sold in Australia from 5% to just 1%

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...there has been an evident shift in travel agents ensuring they are fully abreast of their suppliers' terms and conditions. should travel be disrupted. 99

CATO

commencing July 2022. Labelled by AFTA at the time as "very disappointing" and "another unwelcome blow" to local travel agents already suffering under the weight of the travel shutdown, the move caused a great deal of consternation in the agent community, with many expressing concern the decision would set a precedent for other airlines to follow suit and reduce valuable revenue streams. Seen by many industry observers as an attempt to cajole the industry to migrate from a commission model to a service fee operation, the Qantas decision was followed by a similar reduction in commission structure by American Airlines only a month later. While some have characterised Qantas as kicking agents while they're down, others like Flight Centre have taken a more philosophical view, with CEO Graham 'Skroo' Turner previously espousing confidence that ultimately the market would decide, and if agents are offering

ase commission in recent months. ©Qantas



Millennials have historically opted to organise travel online, but an increased need for expert advice on travelling in a post-COVID era, may see this demographic heading to their local travel agent.



The relationships between suppliers and travel agents has evolved due to the pandemic. APT Travel Group is one supplier that is focussed on strengthening its relationship with travel advisors in the COVID rebound. ©APT



value, they will continue to get a slice of the margin.

TravelManagers' Barry Mayo is "Individual airlines will make "We are not expecting a material

one travel leader who also remains fairly unperturbed by the prospect of airline commissions dropping, stating agents would "remain a great asset" for airlines in the future. decisions that are unique to their business circumstances, their service offering and the effectiveness of their distribution and it is too early to suggest all airlines will follow suit," Mayo said. difference in the way agents and airlines work together post pandemic. Agents will be looking to airlines to provide clear information on COVID safe protocols and requirements, while airlines will be looking to agents to be advocates of their products and COVID safe travel," he added.

Meanwhile Cathay Pacific explained to travelBulletin that it is somewhat agnostic to the argument of selling tickets through agents or direct, because they both represent valuable sales channels. "We believe travel agents will continue to play an important role as airlines and consumers navigate the new travel landscape following the pandemic," the carrier noted. "The priority for airlines and travel agents alike will be how we can best serve the consumer moving forward. From Cathay's perspective, it is important that our customers have easy access to our product via whichever channel best suits their needs, for some that may be via their travel agent, for others that may be direct." When quizzed about agent commissions specifically, Cathay said it remained open and flexible to arrangement that generated value for both the airline and its

network of resellers.

"We are committed to creating strong partnerships that benefit both parties. The challenge, as with any negotiation, is to understand the commercial drivers for each party and identify how best to work together to achieve mutual success," the airline said.

"Reducing cost is just one part of the equation, collaboration is equally as critical to help the industry recover quickly. We do not see that collaboration diminishing... significant effort goes into understanding what customers want and ensuring we are able to deliver. To that point, the best incentive is repeat business. I believe those businesses which place customer satisfaction at the centre of all they do, will win, irrespective of incentives or commissions."

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Individual airlines will make decisions that are unique to their business circumstances. their service offering and the effectiveness of their distribution and it is too early to suggest all airlines will follow suit... 99

Barry Mayo, Chairman, TravelManagers



FAIN STEPS DOWN

ROYAL Caribbean Group (RCG) Chief Executive Officer Richard Fain (**pictured**) is stepping down after more than 33 years at the top of the company, with Chief Financial Officer Jason Liberty named to succeed him.

Fain, who will continue as Chair of the board of directors, is the third-longest-serving Chief Executive Officer among current S&P 500 companies and will serve his last day as CEO on 03 Jan 2022.

RCG under Fain's leadership saw ship categories, including Royal Caribbean International's (RCI) Sovereign, Voyager, and Oasis classes, and Celebrity Cruises'

Solstice and Edge classes.

Fain also oversaw the development of RCI's highly anticipated Icon class. to be introduced in 2023, and Silversea Cruises' Project Evolution, which will become the industry's first hybrid-powered ship when introduced in 2023.

The outgoing CEO said with most of RCG's ships operating, and a full return to cruising approaching, it was the right time to step down; however, he will continue his the introduction new and distinctive involvement in the company's ship construction program.

> "There are no words to express my admiration and appreciation to the people of the Royal Caribbean



Group, who have been the real drivers of our success; and my profound appreciation for the support and guidance of the board of directors during good times and bad throughout this long period of sustained growth," Fain said.

Celestyal signs with Cruise Traveller

CELESTYAL Cruises has joined the growing Cruise Traveller stable of brands as a preferred trade partner. The cruise line is locally led by Asia Pacific Regional Manager Stuart Williams, and is now scheduled to resume operations in Mar 2022 in the Eastern Mediterranean using its two classic ships - the 1,200-guest Celestyal Crystal and the 1,575-passenger Celestyal Olympia.

Celestval's Australian Business Development Manager Mary Williams said Cruise Traveller was an ideal fit for the cruise line's immersive,

all-inclusive smaller ships.

"The Greek Islands are a well-known bucket-list destination for Australians, but our value-added immersive cruises through these magical islands may not be as familiar, so we're very excited to embark on this partnership with Cruise Traveller so that we can welcome more Australians onboard than ever." she said.

The move brings Cruise Traveller's full representation to 56 boutique, luxury and expedition cruising operators across the world.



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UNCERTAINTY CONTINUES TO CAUSE CANCELLATIONS

AMID continuing uncertainty around the resumption unable to cruise from their doorstep until 2023, of cruising in Australia, P&O Cruises, Carnival Cruise Lines and Silversea Cruises were forced to cancel additional sailings Down Under.

P&O Australia has cancelled its Adelaide, Fremantle and Cairns homeport seasons for next year, revoked cruises scheduled to call in Papua New Guinea until Oct next year, and rescinded the reposition sailing from Singapore to Cairns, originally scheduled to depart on 19 May.

All Carnival Splendor voyages are also cancelled up to and including 04 Mar 2022, along with Carnival Spirit departures through until 06 Mar 2022.

Meanwhile, voyages aboard Silver Muse will not operate, but Silversea has not given up on its overall local summer deployment.

"While the Government has made positive indications about cruising's return, including verbal commitment to end the cruise ban on 17 Dec, no concrete decision has been made," said Managing Director Asia Pacific Adam Radwanski.

The season had been scheduled to kick off on 21 Dec with the arrival of the 596-guest Muse in Cairns, but mid-last month. Silversea confirmed the on our plan to return to service, there is still no first three departures had been cancelled.

Radwanski said the move was necessitated "in light of ongoing ambiguity from state and federal governments on the return of cruising in Australia".

Carnival's outgoing President Sture Myrmell said there was no doubt Adelaide, Fremantle and Cairns government authorities, public health experts, local all remained important ports for visiting ships when governments allow cruising to resume in Australian waters.

however, they are all extremely popular ports of call for ships on coastal or around mainland Australia itineraries and will benefit from a resumption in cruising, when approved."

66

... while we continue to make progress on our plan to return to service, there is still no certainty when cruise departures from Australia can resume **99**

Carnival Cruise Line

Meanwhile, Carnival said in a travel agent update: "while we continue to make progress certainty when cruise departures from Australia can resume."

"Carnival will resume cruising when the time is right and will do so with enhanced health measures developed in conjunction with ports of call and the Cruise Lines International Association," the line noted.



Esprit to Lindblad

CRYSTAL Cruises confirmed the sale of its 62-passenger adventure yacht Crystal Esprit to Lindblad Expeditions last month, with the Genting Hong Kong brand saying the vessel "does not fit into future plans".

The TTC-owned cruise line confirmed it was the buyer in its yearly financial report, as well as reporting next year's bookings were 51% ahead of bookings for 2021 at the same point 12 months ago.

Around the world in 155 nights

AZAMARA Cruises last month announced a massive 155-night journey World Voyage aboard its newest ship, Azamara Onward, which arrives next year.

The new five-month journey will visit more than 40 countries and six continents, and will include 22 overnight stays and 27 late nights in port, to give cruisers the opportunity to fully immerse themselves into each destination.

Celebrity Apex is christened

GODMOTHER of Celebrity Cruises' Celebrity Apex, lawyer Reshma Saujani, led the ship's traditional naming ceremony last month.

Bringing together more than 1,500 guests, employees, and crew members, Celebrity President & Chief Executive Officer Lisa Lutoff-Perlo and Royal Caribbean Group President & Chief Executive Officer Richard Fain also both joined Saujani for the ceremony.



SUCCESS OVERSEAS HELPS AUSTRALIA

THE number of passengers who maintaining health and safety as have sailed in other countries since cruising resumed last year has now passed four million, providing strong evidence that our industry's Covid-19 measures are working. Detailed health protocols and stringent testing and vaccination requirements have allowed cruising to resume in more than 50 countries around the world, including key regions in the Mediterranean, northern Europe, the United States and

the Caribbean.

Around three quarters of ships in the CLIA member fleet will have returned to service by the end of 2021, with more ships due to come online early 2022. This is an excellent

achievement so far, and the between cruise lines, governments, health authorities and other stakeholders.

The extensive protocols implemented through these partnerships have been shown to be successful in mitigating the risks of Covid-19, while also

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10 Nov P&O cancels Adelaide, Fremantle, Cairns **12** Nov More Carnival cancellations **18** Nov Silversea delays season 23 Nov RCI returns to California

CLIA VIEW Joel Katz, Managing Director CLIA Australasia

key to this success has been close partnerships established

the industry's highest priority.

This will be essential as we work towards resumption in Australia, ensuring that we implement measures that not only work to prevent Covid-19 from boarding our ships, but also maintain precautions on board and provide clear response plans to isolate and effectively manage any cases that might appear.

With Australia's vaccination rates inching higher and a strong track record from our industry's efforts overseas, we're confident this can be achieved in a way that prepares us for a careful revival in local waters.

Once the Federal Government lifts its cruise ban, it will still take several months before health protocols can be implemented in collaboration with state governments and ships can be returned from overseas.

But after months of persistent lobbying efforts and ongoing discussions with governments around Australia, we now appear to have a light at the end the tunnel.

RUISE ΚΙΥ

HEADLINES **NOVEMBER 2021**

CONNECT THE DOTS

IN NEED of some therapeutic mindless activity? Try our dot to dot! This festive themed activity has a slight twist with two dot to dots in one. Connect the numbered dots with straight lines, and the lettered dots with curly lines. If you want to increase your relaxation, why not colour in the picture after you've connected the dots?



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