

travelBulletin

FEBRUARY 2021

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ACTION, THE
INDUSTRY SAYS
ENOUGH IS ENOUGH**

THE ELEPHANTS IN THE ROOM

The world as we know it will never be the same. Bruce Piper investigates five big issues facing the travel industry, that can no longer be ignored.

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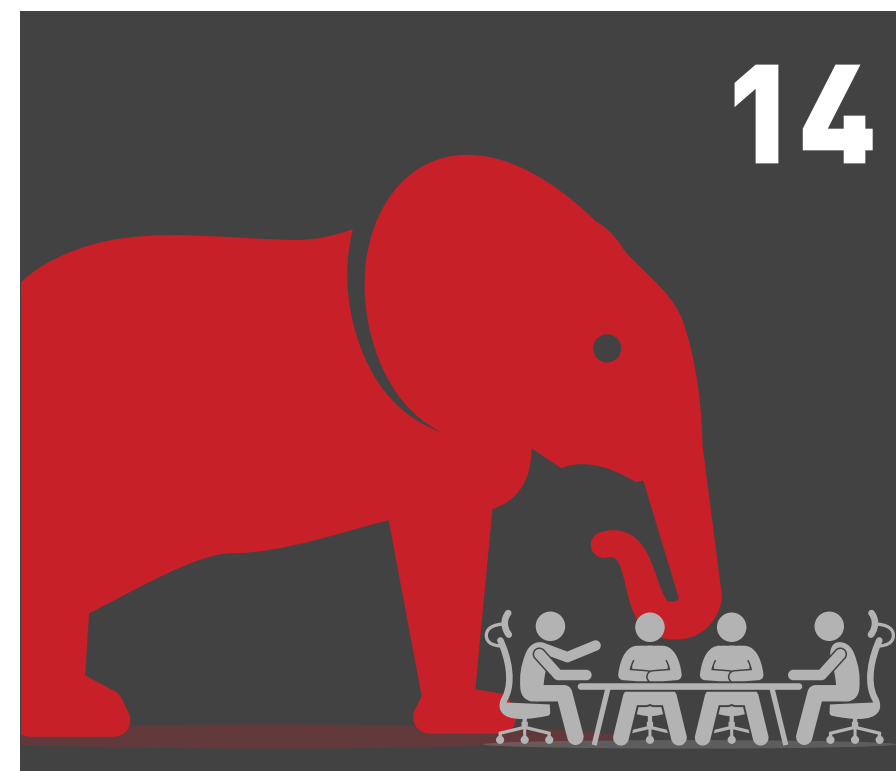
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COVER STORY

14 The elephants in the room
In a world irrevocably changed by the COVID-19 pandemic, businesses will need to take a long hard look at how they operate and keep the doors open going forward. Bruce Piper investigates five key issues that can no longer be ignored.

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This month's contributors

Dean Long, Brett Jardine, Joel Katz, Tim Hoopmann

Image bottom right: A render of *Norwegian Viva* ©Norwegian Cruise Line

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EDITORIAL
Editor in Chief and Publisher – Bruce Piper

Editorial and Production Manager –
Anna Piper
Ph: 1300 799 220 or 02 8007 6760
anna.piper@traveldaily.com.au

Editorial team – Myles Stedman, Adam
Bishop, Bruce Piper

ADVERTISING
National Sales Manager
Lisa Maroun
Ph: 0405 132 575 or 02 8007 6760
lisa.maroun@travelbulletin.com.au

ART
Design – Sarah Beyer

Publishing Director – Jenny Piper

Suite 1, Level 2, 64 Talavera Rd
Macquarie Park NSW 2113 Australia
PO Box 1010 Epping NSW 1710 Australia
Tel: 1300 799 220 (+61 2 8007 6760)

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From the publisher

Bruce Piper



WITH Singapore Airlines having now joined the rapidly rising tide of carriers announcing cuts to base commission on fares out of Australia, it's increasingly clear that any travel distributor relying on front-end remuneration for flight sales must urgently change its business model.

SIA has followed in the footsteps of Cathay Pacific, Hawaiian Airlines, Emirates, American Airlines and of course the Qantas Group - a cohort which in 2019 collectively held more than 46% of total Australian international passenger traffic.

While some travel agency groups have downplayed the impact of the Qantas cuts, noting heavy competition and plenty of opportunities from other commission-paying carriers on key routes out of Australia, the proportion of commissionable seats is rapidly declining as more carriers join the rush to slash agent pay.

Indeed, of the top 10 international carriers operating in Australia in 2019, only Virgin Australia, China Southern, Malaysia Airlines, Qatar Airways and Air New Zealand continue to pay base commission - and

Virgin Australia currently doesn't even fly internationally, while Air NZ has already reduced pay to agents in its home market, with some pundits suggesting Australia could soon follow.

Of course, base commission is just one part of the industry remuneration pie, and if the cuts are matched by increased overrides on the back-end the overall effect will be minimal, at least on groups which have the muscle to negotiate with the airlines and then back up their promises by delivering volume - which is probably why the screams of protest across the industry haven't been louder.

While there are clearly cogent arguments for carriers to reduce base commission, it has also been somewhat fascinating to observe the knots they have been tying themselves in as they communicate the decision to travel resellers.

Assurances that "the travel agency community in Australia will continue to play an integral role in our distribution strategy" ring somewhat hollow when they come directly after dropping the hammer on long-term business partners who are already at rock bottom after two years of the pandemic.

basis because of the minimal overheads.

Ticketing will be provided through Express Travel Group, which also uses the Aeronology platform for its members. The Travel Advisors is set to formally debut in May.

Lots of action at BPG

TRAVELBULLETIN'S parent company Business Publishing Group (BPG) has launched a new "Travel Daily Events" offering, providing the ideal solution for destinations and suppliers to reach the industry in the new world of constrained budgets and event restrictions.

Developed in partnership with Richard Taylor, whose Travel Community Hub has been an inspirational lifeline throughout the pandemic, TD Events combines a range of options to engage in an online webinar format, coupled with the marketing and promotional power of the BPG portfolio including *Travel Daily*, *Cruise Weekly* and of course *travelBulletin* - for more information see traveldaily.com.au/events.

MEANWHILE this month BPG is also launching a new Industry Survival Survey to take the pulse of the travel and tourism sector almost two years after the onset of COVID-19. Participation in the survey is free, and those who take part have the opportunity to win one of three \$50 Gift Cards, as well as to help industry lobbying efforts.

We'll be reporting on the outcome of the survey in next month's *travelBulletin*, so please respond via traveldaily.com.au/survey.

“

For our travel agent partners it is a win-win because it enables them to book our holiday packages with total confidence, knowing that neither they nor their clients will be out of pocket if COVID conspires to cancel the holiday.

”

Greg McCallum,
Entire Travel
Group Sales
& Marketing
Director

INDUSTRY ACES THE TENNIS



IT'S amazing who you can bump into at the tennis, with *travelBulletin* catching up with Tourism Australia MD Philippa Harrison and the organisation's Chief Marketing Officer, Susan Coghill, outside Melbourne's Rod Laver Arena during last month's Australian Open Tennis tournament.

They're pictured with another travel industry stalwart, Sue Marr ex Thai Airways, who got her annual tennis fix by officiating at the Open this year.

Entire Travel Group protects comm

ENTIRE Travel Group has launched a new Peace of Mind Booking Plan, which it's describing as a "ground-breaking solution" that overcomes key barriers to booking while also ensuring agent incomes are protected.

Available on hundreds of packages across Entire's expanded portfolio of 28 destinations, the program offers a full refund if a customer's plans are disrupted by COVID-19, but also sees travel agencies still receive full commission.

"For our travel agent

partners it is a win-win because it enables them to book our holiday packages with total confidence, knowing that neither they nor their clients will be out of pocket if COVID conspires to cancel the holiday," said Entire Travel Group Sales & Marketing Director, Greg McCallum.

As well as covering COVID-related disruptions, Entire's booking protection also covers other factors such as flight disruptions, document theft and adverse weather events, with the aim of giving consumers increased confidence to book.

Continues over page

IN BRIEF

Aeronology plots retail strategy

AS IF developing a unique technology platform unifying NDC, GDS and LCC content isn't enough, the team behind Australian startup Aeronology has set the company's sights on an even bigger target - the thousands of travel advisors forced to leave the industry during the pandemic but who would really like to return to doing what they love.

The company last month announced the launch of The Travel Advisors - a new retail group which provides all the tools of the travel consultant trade including product, booking platform and ticketing for a minimal cost of just \$350. Set to launch in May, Aeronology CEO Russell Carstensen told *travelBulletin* he believes there are many who will return to travel under this model, which will allow them to be profitable even on a part-time

Continues from previous page

ACCC reviews HLO, CTM deal

THE Australian Competition and Consumer Commission is casting its eye over the \$175 million acquisition of Helloworld Travel Limited’s corporate businesses by Corporate Travel Management, seeking submissions from the industry about the impact it may have on competition.

A Market Enquiries Letter sought input which was due by the end of last month, with the ACCC asking suppliers, customers and other stakeholders about how Helloworld and CTM compete, the difficulty for new entrants to make their presence felt in the market, and whether customers can manage their own corporate travel through online booking websites or directly with upstream booking providers such as airlines, hotel

chains and car rental firms.

The outcome of the “informal merger review” is due by mid-March, with regulatory clearance cited as one of the conditions for the settlement of the deal which includes \$100 million in cash and \$75 million worth of CTM shares.

Carnival puts up the white flag

CARNIVAL Cruise Line will deploy its *Carnival Spirit* outside of Australian waters for the first time in almost a decade, as a result of the ongoing uncertainty about a cruise resumption.

Senior Cruise Director, John Heald, revealed the move, saying *Spirit* would operate itineraries out of Jacksonville, Florida from early next month.

Currently the company’s Australian cruise pause is in place until the end of May, but Carnival said both *Spirit* and its other local

“We fought a good fight but just could not see the light at the end of the tunnel...this is a terrible blow and a tragic end to not only my business but my whole passion and career”

Wayne Hamilton, Swagman Tours MD

ship, *Carnival Splendor*, are “both scheduled to return to Australia when cruise operations resume from their scheduled home ports of Sydney and Brisbane”.

Swagman closure

THE COVID-19 pandemic sadly claimed yet another travel industry victim last month, with long-time Africa specialist Swagman Tours placed into voluntary administration just before Christmas.

CEO Wayne Hamilton told *travelBulletin* he was devastated at the move. “We fought a good fight but just could not see the light at the end of the tunnel,” he said, with Geelong-based Worrells appointed to close the business down.

“I know this is a terrible blow and a tragic end to not only my business, but my whole passion and career, we have fought so long to keep it going,” he added.

DATA ROOM

MAIN DOMESTIC ROUTES
Top 10 domestic city pairs, November 2021

City pair	Passengers YE Nov 20 (000)	Passengers YE Nov 21 (000)	% change
Melbourne-Sydney	2,823.6	1,885.9	-33.2
Brisbane-Sydney	1,587.6	1,115.9	-29.7
Brisbane-Cairns	746.3	1,003.1	+34.4
Brisbane-Melbourne	1,111.0	812.0	-26.9
Brisbane-Townsville	535.7	685.0	+27.9
Adelaide-Melbourne	758.7	614.8	-19.0
Brisbane-Mackay	417.4	532.3	+27.5
Adelaide-Sydney	701.1	505.7	-27.9
Hobart-Melbourne	469.4	N/A
Adelaide-Brisbane	408.4	443.5	+8.6
ALL CITY PAIRS	22,525.1	23,152.6	+2.8

Source: BITRE

VISITOR ARRIVALS
Top 10 destinations, November 2021

Country of residence	Nov 2019	Nov 2020	Nov 2021	change - original Oct 21/ Nov 21
Singapore	48,700	350	3,170	3,010
UK	68,880	840	2,790	2,440
India	37,380	330	2,310	2,010
USA	75,040	950	1,710	1,490
New Zealand	120,410	1,640	1,060	850
China(b)	101,390	340	1,030	880
Philippines	11,480	210	580	240
Hong Kong	22,860	220	470	410
Canada	19,110	180	420	360
Samoa	1,050	0	410	280
All visitors arrivals	815,910	8,820	20,860	+16,550

Source: ABS

RESIDENT RETURNS
Top 10 destinations, November 2021

Country of stay	Nov 2019	Nov 2020	Nov 2021	change - original Oct 21/ Nov 21
USA	78,960	1,340	3,670	3,100
UK	36,050	1,600	3,410	2,910
New Zealand	119,100	1,780	2,200	1,770
India	37,260	530	1,610	1,360
Singapore	39,310	450	1,260	1,160
Unit Arab Emir	4,780	250	1,130	1,040
Pakistan	2,560	120	580	540
PNG	7,970	540	570	250
Germany	6,390	250	530	440
China	52,550	550	530	360
All resident returns	849,790	13,000	25,890	+21,130

Source: ABS

DOMESTIC AIR MARKET
November 2021

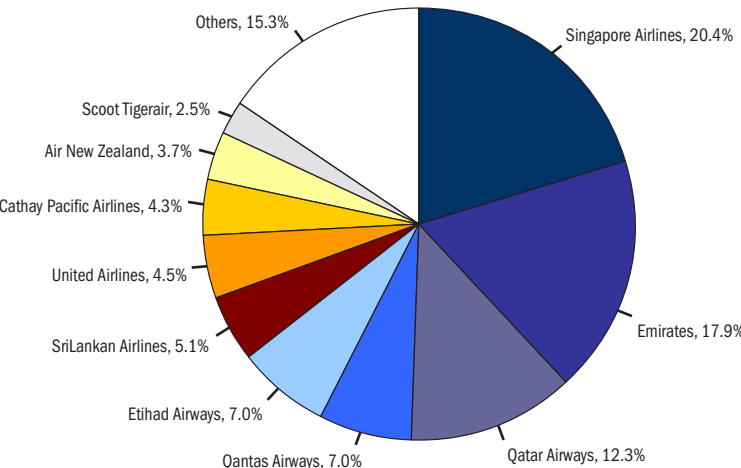
	Nov 20	Nov 21	Growth %	Year end Nov 20	Year end Nov 21	Growth %
Total pax carried	1.11m	1.52m	+36.9	22.53m	23.15m	+2.8
Revenue pax km (RPK)	1.23bn	1.71bn	+38.8	25.96bn	27.17bn	+4.7
Available seat kms (ASK)	1.98bn	2.98bn	+50.0	36.51bn	44.01bn	+20.5
Load factor (%)	62.0	57.4	-4.6*	71.1	61.7	-9.4*
Aircraft trips (000)	20.6	26.8	+29.7	304.3	357.9	17.6

*Percentage points difference

Source: BITRE



INTERNATIONAL AIR MARKET SHARE
Share of passengers carried – November 2021



Source: BITRE

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

City pair	Passengers YE Nov 20	Passengers YE Nov 21	% of total	% change 21/20
Auckland-Sydney	539,373	117,631	9.5	-78.2
Auckland-Brisbane	305,632	95,976	7.8	-68.6
Auckland-Melbourne	427,929	89,317	7.2	-79.1
Singapore-Sydney	471,865	56,261	4.6	-88.1
Los Angeles-Sydney	302,405	50,467	4.1	-83.3
Auckland-Gold Coast	103,077	39,613	3.2	-61.6
Dubai-Sydney	261,084	38,810	3.1	-85.1
Singapore-Melbourne	471,880	38,704	3.1	-91.8
Doha-Sydney	226,782	37,622	3.0	-83.4
Singapore-Brisbane	286,575	31,277	2.5	-89.1
Top 10 City Pairs	3,396,602	595,678	48.3	-82.5
Other City Pairs	9,865,164	637,837	51.7	-93.5
ALL CITY PAIRS	13,261,766	1,233,515	100.0	-90.7

Source: BITRE

Travel Daily
HEADLINES

- 04 Jan Industry urged to rise up
- 05 Jan Singapore freezes bubble
- 06 Jan Testing protocols eased
- 07 Jan Domestic in good shape
- 10 Jan Parker Travel Collection shut
- 10 Jan Cruise legislation update
- 11 Jan Katrina Barry to leave travel sector
- 11 Jan ACCC probes HLO, CTM
- 12 Jan FCTG independent platform
- 12 Jan Thai Airways ups comm

- 13 Jan Scenic plots Aussie season
- 13 Jan Qantas group slashes capacity
- 14 Jan Cathay Pacific cuts commission
- 17 Jan ACCC probes KE, OZ deal
- 18 Jan AFTA comes out fighting
- 19 Jan Genting HK wind-up filing
- 19 Jan Orion to cruise Kimberley in 2023
- 19 Jan Qantas pushes for direct
- 21 Jan WA closure rocks industry
- 25 Jan Industry rises up in action

INTREPID MAKES IMPACT

INTREPID has added 22 new “impact initiatives” to its list of itineraries in 2022, bolstering its tours that directly support environmental or wildlife conservation, preserve Indigenous culture or support marginalised social groups.

Highlights of the new batch include supporting local women in Morocco by offering visits to a female-run tea house on the river in Ait Ben Hadou, as well as carbon-neutral whale watching in Iceland.

“Businesses such as ours have an exciting opportunity, not to mention a responsibility, to find more ways to contribute in a positive way to the places and people we visit,” Senior Product Manager Erica Kritikides said.

“Being more intentional with the experiences we offer our travellers allows us to collectively make a greater positive impact in our shared world,” she added.



Top: Carbon-neutral whale watching in Iceland. ©North Sailing

Bottom: Travellers can visit Vollpension in Vienna, a business with a mission to seniors on their way out of financial poverty and loneliness. ©Mark Glassner



AFTA VIEW

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

AS WE head into 2022, it's worth reflecting on the year that's been while also throwing ourselves into the year ahead. The past 12 months has not been without its challenges but we also need to celebrate the wins achieved through collective action. Securing Federal Government support for our sector of \$258m is one of those wins.

As a peak industry body, we exist for our members and because of our members. We don't and can't work in isolation; we achieve impact through harnessing the experience, expertise and passion of our members and through collaborating with other peak industry bodies.

Two years on from COVID's first appearance in Australia, our fight for support continues. This need for support was again reinforced by so many members of the Travel Sector during the recent National Day of Action. Travel Expert Belle Goldie successfully galvanised travel businesses all around Australia as delegations to local Federal MPs. The cumulative impact of this on top of ongoing MP briefings our members have had, and targeted local activations including the tremendous work of Jo Francis and WA agents matters. Importantly, these efforts have centred on a key success factor – a common ask. This common ask is the need for ongoing support given the value of travel professionals and the importance of international travel normalising as soon as possible.

Now more than ever we need to keep working together with a clear focus on our shared goal of ongoing support.

AFTA is calling for a \$190m *Travel Sector Skills Retention and Recovery Package* which includes the immediate release of the estimated \$66m already allocated to the travel sector as part of the *COVID-19 Consumer Travel Support Program*, but so far unspent.

We are also seeking a *JobStarter Package* similar to the *International Aviation Support Program* to provide \$10,000 per new or re-engaged employee.

Our ask of the Federal Government is simple – please support us so that we can keep supporting travelling Australians.

FC RAMPS UP INDEPENDENCE

FLIGHT Centre Travel Group (FCTG) has introduced a new digital ecosystem called Home for its independent advisors, designed to further support its remote network and foster a strong return of sales volumes.

The newly enhanced sign-on platform offers supplier data, ticketing, support, marketing and an upgraded product booking platform all in the one location, FCTG Independent GM Australia Astrid Richardson said, adding the Flight Centre's technology team had “worked tirelessly over the last 18 months to deliver a solution that will not only serve our growing network of 300 independent agencies and mobile consultants across Australia, but all of the travel entrepreneurs that join our community in the future”.

“We admire and applaud

the devotion and ambition of independent travel agents and

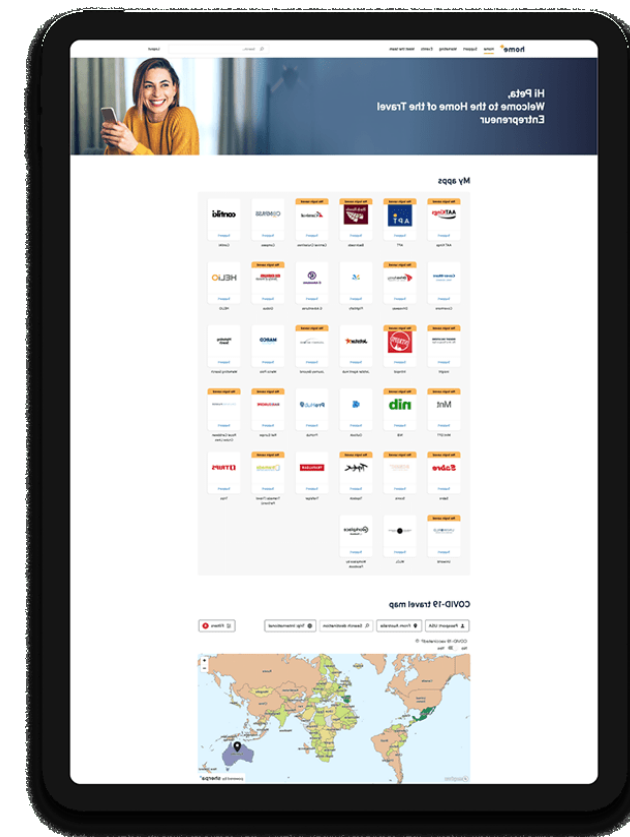
agency group,” Richardson said. Major benefits of the online

system include cutting down on time searching for the latest supplier deals, dispensing with a need to navigate complex systems, or need to compare prices or stress about new regulations and requirements.

“Through Home, we're delivering the tools and support they need to focus on growing their business and doing what they do best: designing and managing travel experiences for their clients,” Richardson added.

The platform is now being rolled out across the Travel Partners, Travel Associates at Home and Flight Centre Independent brands and will strategically complement Flight

Centre's core bricks and mortar network.



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BARRY DEPARTS TRAVEL

THE Travel Corporation's MD for Trafalgar, Costsaver and the Contiki brands Katrina Barry has announced a shock exit from the travel industry to take up a leadership position role in the technology sector.

Barry has been with TTC since 2013 and admitted the call to leave the company has been an "incredibly difficult decision".

"Working for TTC over the last eight years with its exceptional travel experiences and people has, without a doubt, been the highlight of my career," Barry said.

"I love this business and the brands I have had the privilege to work for... the depth of respect, admiration and gratitude I have for the Tollman family is incomparable," she added.

Barry has been replaced on an interim basis by Trafalgar's Global Marketing Officer Dee Marrocco, and she will also step down from her senior role with the Australian Federation of Travel Agents.



CATO VIEW

Dennis Bunnik, Chairman,
Council of Australian Tour Operators

THE landscape of our industry is ever changing, and the operating environment continues to be problematic, with the lack of financial support and resources.

Recent announcements by airlines such as Qantas, Emirates, Cathay, Hawaiian (and more expected) has confirmed commission on air tickets will be reduced to just 1% has added to these challenges. This clearly indicates the future security of travel agents is definitely not up in the air but rather on land and in the water.

CATO members have long worked closely with travel agents to grow their business. Pre-Covid it is estimated that CATO members provided in excess of AU\$1.2 billion of support to travel agents in the form of commissions, training, marketing support, conference sponsorship, brochures, educationals and subsidised travel.

In contrast to the steady and long-term decline in airline remuneration, the commissions paid by CATO members have remained stable and at a level that fairly reflects the true nature of the partnership between agents and suppliers. Whilst some of the way we do things may change in this new era to future proof our businesses and the industry to make it more sustainable, the importance of our partnerships and collaboration is more important than ever.

There are significant opportunities for travel agents to generate higher returns, by selling more land - whether this be group tours or bespoke FIT packages through specialist CATO wholesalers. Whatever the travel agent client's interest, there is a CATO member who will be able to help travel agents create the ultimate travel experience for their client.

As we rebuild our industry, the relationship between tour operators/wholesalers and agents will become stronger than ever due to the support and education needed to help passengers navigate their way through the various new protocols. The changes in airline remuneration mean agents need to refocus on building strong mutually beneficial relationships with CATO members, that can help secure their financial future.



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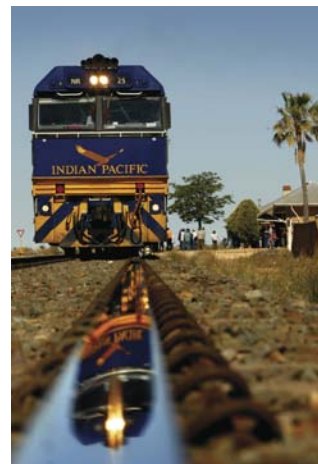
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Left to right:
Journey Beyond's
portfolio
includes Sal
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The Indian
Pacific takes
travellers
across Australia
©Great
Southern Rail

ON A NEW TRACK

JOURNEY Beyond found itself with a new owner last month when the American-based Hornblower Group agreed to acquire the company for \$600 million.

The operator of iconic brands such as The Ghan and the Indian Pacific will now be backed by the weight of the San Francisco-headquartered travel business, which currently owns the American Queen Voyages brand and has a strong presence across 125 cities in the United States.

Hornblower is expected to use its expertise and large bank of resources supplied by owner Crestview Partners to accelerate the growth of the Journey Beyond network in Australia, a market it is anticipating will enjoy a sharp rebound in the coming month and years, and will also deploy more cross-marketing opportunities between Journey Beyond's assets in the process.

"Hornblower is extremely optimistic about the tourism industry and the rebound ahead, one in which Australian tourism is seen as both resilient

and highly desirable," the company said.

"There is a unique opportunity to leverage Hornblower's unmatched technology and marketing expertise to further develop and deliver incredible tourism experiences in iconic locations in Australia and around the world."

The timing of the purchase coincides with a strong uptick in bookings for Journey Beyond, as Aussies look to book belated holidays in the domestic market as certainty around state borders staying open continues to grow.

In addition to its cross-continental rail services, Journey Beyond's portfolio is also comprised of Outback Spirit, Sal Salis Ningaloo Reef, Horizontal Falls Seaplane Adventures & Melbourne Skydeck.

Despite the change in ownership, Hornblower has indicated that the brand's 1,200 staff are unlikely to be impacted and that CEO Chris Tallent will remain with the company at its head office in Adelaide.

Green chief appointed

FLIGHT Centre has promoted Michelle Degenhardt to be its new Global Sustainability Officer, a newly created position that will see her ensure business practices become more environmentally and socially sustainable.

The former Culture and Employee Engagement Leader is based in Flight Centre's global head office in Brisbane, where she is reporting directly to Global Head of Risk and Sustainability Brett

Anderson.

The appointment arrives as the company, which is a signatory to the United Nations Global Compact, ramps up its corporate social responsibility efforts.

"Sustainability is an area that is extremely important to our company, our people and our leisure and corporate customers," Flight Centre MD Graham Turner said.

TRAVEL REMEMBERS INNOVATOR

THE travel sector is mourning the passing of Travel Associates founder Greg Ashmore, who tragically passed away last month following a battle with Motor Neurone Disease.

Responding to the news with a heavy heart was Flight Centre's Global CEO Graham Turner, who praised Ashmore as one of the company's key figures over the last 30 years.

"Since 1990 when Greg started working with us in Melbourne he has epitomised and reflected the best of our culture, and has also had amazing personal success through his dedicated service to his many loyal clients," Turner said.

"It's a tragedy he leaves us at such a young age. Our thoughts go out to his husband Shannon, his family and the many friends and colleagues in the Flight Centre Travel Group."

Among his many achievements at Flight Centre was being the driving force behind the formation of the independent Travel Associates concept in Australia in 1998, a brand that has gone to become one of the travel company's major success stories.

One of Flight Centre's founders Geoff Harris told **travelBulletin** that he had the pleasure of knowing Ashmore back when he was a "skinny 19-year-old", first employing him in 1992 and remaining very close ever since.

"Greg's vision became his life's work, finishing last year because of his illness at Travel Associates Surrey Hills, an international brand



that has grown to over 120 stores before COVID," Harris said.

The future of the Travel Associates brand is now in the hands of General Manager FCTG Premium Brands Danielle Galloway, who recalled fondly meeting Ashmore for the first time when she assumed the role in 2018.

"When we first met, Greg started to share what he considered to be the secrets to success for Travel Associates and as the new GM of this great brand, I knew I needed to lean in and really learn from Greg's experience and advice," Galloway remembers.

"He was adamant that it was a strong team effort and a team ethic that strengthened his business. You needed to fly your

own flag wherever you can, dress in your business for success, present the office with some flair and make yourself known at events that can work for new client networking, and trade-related.

"If you are out representing Ashmore & James anywhere, you are dressed in full business attire, you offer a firm professional handshake, you display impeccable manners, you listen and take an interest in others with sincerity, and you demonstrate professionalism all round - you walk the talk," Galloway added.

In 2015, Ashmore was inducted into Flight Centre Travel Group's Hall of Fame – a prestigious accolade that only 20 people have ever received.

TEMPERING OPTIMISM

AUSTRALIA'S two largest airlines were scaling down capacity expectations last month as the Omicron wave ripped through the country and the confidence of Australian travellers along with it.

Qantas and Jetstar reduced their capacity for flights scheduled between January and March this year, with the flying kangaroo forced to concede domestic volumes for the period would be at around 70% of pre-COVID levels, down from the 102% initially forecast.

Virgin Australia made similar moves, slashing flight volumes by a quarter until the end of February, removing 10 services from its schedule in the process including its Sydney to Fiji route.

"Virgin Australia remains focused on growing its network and consumer reach and will resume services as soon as travel demand improves," the airline's CEO Jayne Hrdlicka said.

"Although we don't know when this wave will pass, we do know that as we make the shift to living with COVID-19 there will continue to be changes in all our lives."

Qantas CEO Alan Joyce was quick to place a positive spin on the reduced capacity forecast, stating that despite the cuts this quarter, the pipeline for bookings were looking much healthy for later in the year.

"People are already looking beyond what's happening now, with early bookings for the Easter holidays in April looking promising for both domestic and international," Joyce said.

"We have the flexibility to add capacity back if demand improves earlier than expected, but 70% still represents a lot of domestic flying

and it's a quantum improvement on the levels we faced only a few months ago."

Qantas added that while international capacity for the period will fall from 30% to roughly 20% of pre-COVID levels, the focus of the cuts would be on reducing route frequencies and shifting to smaller aircraft rather than suspending services completely where achievable.

However, following its initial announcement, Qantas was forced to make further domestic volume cuts in the wake of a shock decision by the Western Australia Premier Mark McGowan to close the state's border indefinitely.

The decision will likely see Sydney to London services continue through Darwin instead of Perth for longer, and a planned Perth to Rome service delayed.



Top: Flight capacity expectations have been scaled back by Qantas and Virgin Australia as travel demand continues to be impacted by Omicron.

Bottom: Qantas' recently announced Perth-Rome service is likely to be delayed in light of Western Australia's extended border closure. ©Qantas

EXERCISE YOUR WAY TO BETTER MENTAL HEALTH

By Tim Hoopmann

I HAVE spent many years taking care of my mental health with regular exercise. It's a vital part of my every day and has a profound positive effect on my mental health and general wellbeing.

There are many ways that exercise positively influences your mental health:

- It promotes the release of feel-good chemicals in your brain, like endorphins and serotonin.
- It helps you sleep better so you rest fully at night and feel more energised during the day.
- It gives you a sense of accomplishment as your fitness improves and you start achieving your goals.
- Exercise is often a shared activity with others, so you get the added benefits of social connection.

To reap these benefits, I generally like to exercise at least five times a week. I am a morning person and enjoy my exercise at the start of the day. I like to either swim, run, paddle board, hike, or cycle. This gives me a range of different exercises and I tend to mix it up to provide variety. Each of us is different so find the exercise you enjoy and the time of the day that best suits. It is important to remember that while more exercise is better than less – any exercise is better than no exercise.

Often the greatest challenge is getting started. If you're waiting for motivation to arrive at your doorstep before you start exercising, you might be waiting a

long time. The key to motivation is that it comes after you act. By starting small and experiencing some benefits, you give motivation a chance as you build up your momentum.

Here are six tips for starting an exercise routine from scratch.

- **Find your reason** – you are more likely to stick with exercises if it's linked to something you really value in life. Ask yourself, "why will exercise make my life better in a meaningful way?"
- **Start small** – try doing a little exercise each couple of days. Then slowly increase too daily. If you're stuck, just walking around your local park is a great start.
- **Make it part of your routine** – the more decisions you must make about when to exercise, the closer you'll come to deciding not to. Set a time each day for exercise and stick to that scheduled time.
- **Do something you enjoy** – exercise doesn't have to be serious. Find an activity you enjoy and you're more likely to keep doing it.
- **Set goals and monitor progress** – it's very rewarding



to track your progress towards a specific goal. It makes every exercise session feel purposeful.

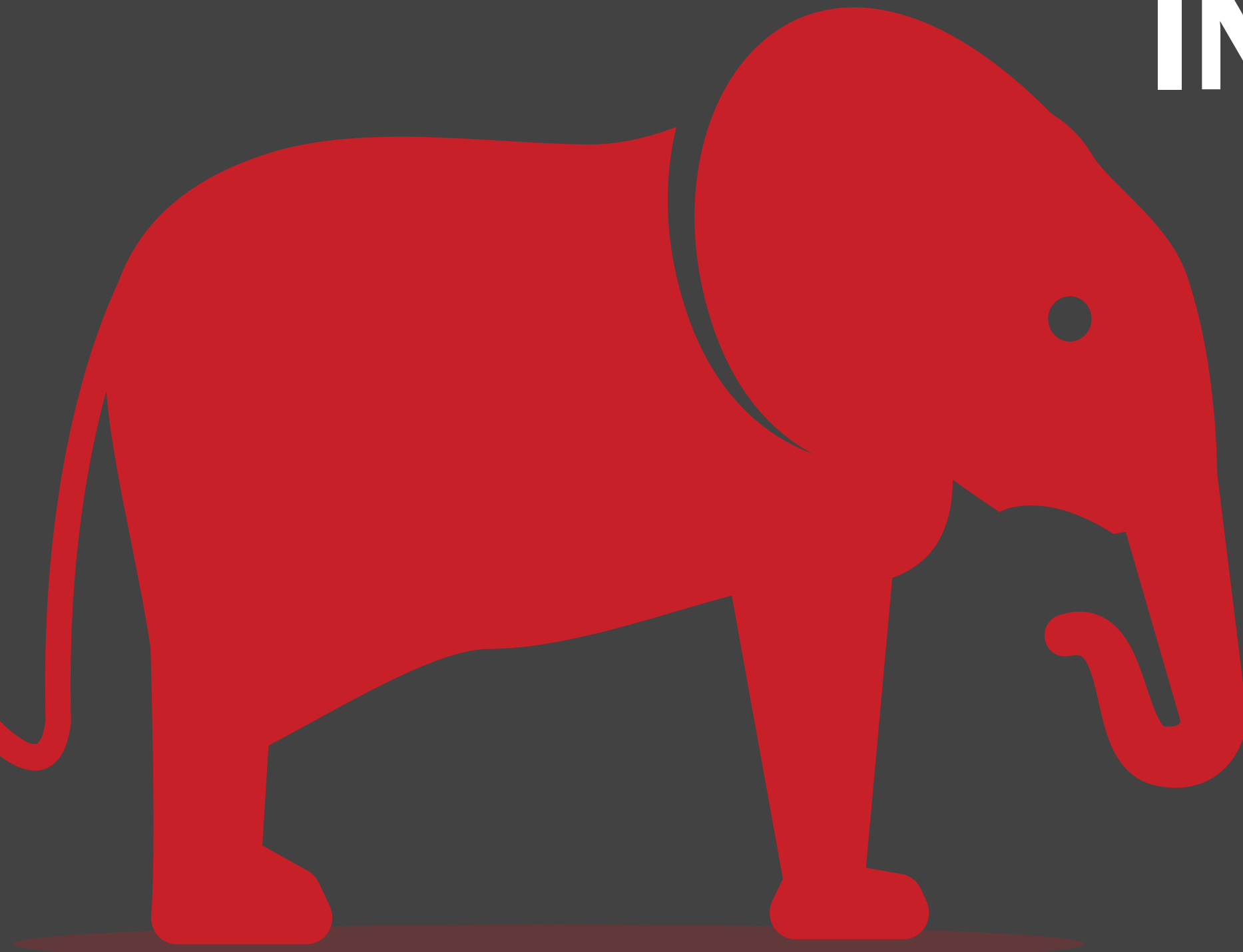
- **Make a commitment to others** – you're less likely to opt out if you have a friend or team relying on you to be there.

Most importantly, be kind to yourself if you haven't exercised for a while. Gently ease into your exercise routine and build on your base. Treat each day as a fresh start and enjoy the journey. Over time monitor how you are feeling and the positive impact it is having on your mental health and wellbeing.



Tim Hoopmann is a speaker, mentor and coach, with a passion for growing small business through using technology to increase productivity and reduce costs. He is also a volunteer speaker for Beyond Blue, working to raise awareness of anxiety and depression, reduce the associated stigma and encourage people to get help.

THE ELEPHANTS IN THE ROOM



As the COVID-19 pandemic grinds on, there are signs of a light at the end of the tunnel for the Australian travel and cruise sector. Governments increasingly appear to be open to “living with the virus” and lifting some of the restrictions that have decimated the industry since March 2020. Having said that, it’s clear that the world will never be the same again, and that means some businesses will need to take a long hard look at what they do going forward if they want to keep the doors open. **BRUCE PIPER** investigates five of the key issues that we’re all going to have to deal with.

IT’S tempting to think, as we reflect on the halcyon days of 2019, that we had it all figured out back then. The travel sector was a well-oiled machine, where each part of the distribution system added value and was appropriately remunerated for doing so. However the reality is somewhat different, and perhaps taking a longer

term view of the evolution of the industry over the last 50 years or so, the only thing that has been constant in travel and tourism has been change.

Although there have been plenty of external shocks - think of various wars, 9/11, SARS, MERs, the global financial crisis and scores of natural disasters - the industry has also changed



significantly from within, as entrepreneurs develop new ways of doing things, creating new products and services and making the most of the opportunities in front of them. And that's not to even touch on the impact of technology, which has been effectively harnessed to improve processes, make things so much more efficient and inevitably improve productivity.

As we enter the third year of the pandemic, there are many issues facing the world of travel as we rebuild it from the ground up. Here's my analysis of some of the key topics in front of us.

1 COMMISSION

IT'S now crystal clear that some suppliers - particularly airlines - are taking the breathing space afforded by the pandemic to make massive changes to their business models. The holy grail of "base commission" - a percentage of sales under agreements negotiated between the International Air Transport Association (IATA) and travel agents around the globe - is clearly under threat as airlines continue to pursue a direct relationship with their customers.

There's absolutely no doubt that with the evolution of technology this trend will continue. We can all give our own reasons as to why we believe it's a flawed strategy, but there are certainly similarly strong arguments as to why carriers want to do this particularly in a world where loyalty and connection to brands are so increasingly important.

A few observations on the commission issue. Firstly



“
The bottom line is that airlines want to own the customer...If you were a business that relied on base commission from airline ticket sales, you have to change your business
”

what's being eliminated is "base" commission - the somewhat paltry amount which is paid to any and all accredited agents through the IATA BSP platform. Prior to the major Qantas announcement about its commission cuts, all of the big groups including Flight Centre, Helloworld Travel, Express Travel Group, Corporate Travel Management and more put out statements about how they had successfully renegotiated their agreements with the Australian carrier, and all were universally happy about the outcome at least for the next three years.

The strategy adopted by Qantas, and surely being emulated by its rivals who are going down the same road such as Emirates, Cathay Pacific and Hawaiian Airlines (so far) is likely to see that "base" commission figure shifted into back-end overrides. Rather than dealing with hundreds or thousands of individual agency outlets, airlines can manage a smaller number of large relationships, effectively leveraging these to achieve business goals such as promoting particular routes, targeting certain market segments or optimising individual cabin yields. And those larger agency groups can either "put up or shut up" - if they believe in their power to deliver volume to the airlines, they can negotiate to be appropriately remunerated for their efforts.

The bottom line is that airlines - particularly in their home markets or those where they have a significant market share - want to own the customer. They want to be able to market directly to them and modern technology allows them to do this. This is not something that's going to go away.

My take? Accept this and move on. If you were a business that relied on base commission from airline ticket sales, you have to change your business. And on the bright side, in some other major markets such as the USA, which moved to a zero base commission environment a long time ago, travel businesses which can make money from a different business model continue to thrive.



Left: With International travel off limits for the better part of the past 2 years, the travel trade become a key part of the distribution strategy of some local suppliers and domestic destinations, including tours and experiences. Uptuyu Aboriginal Adventures ©James Fisher/Tourism Australia



Right: Supply is not great enough to meet demand in the rental car market, as Aussies embark on roadtrips around the country. ©Tourism Australia

2 PRODUCT

AS THE leisure travel market has been forced to pivot to a new domestic focus, many travel businesses have done the work to capture all that pent-up travel demand among their customer base and redirect it to holidaying locally. With the encouragement of millions of dollars in funding directed to Tourism Australia to facilitate this change, it has been fantastic to see that the travel trade has started to become more key as part of the distribution strategy for some local suppliers who previously had an almost exclusively direct approach to domestic visitors.

However as restrictions have gradually lifted, it's become increasingly clear that there simply is not enough travel and tourism product to satisfy demand from the local market, particularly at the high end. It has become almost impossible to book a stay at a hotel without a long lead-time, with many venues full on weekends with "staycationers," not to mention huge demand for events like weddings and other celebrations postponed due to pandemic lockdowns. Even in the rental car market, in some destinations

it's become incredibly difficult to secure a vehicle as the major players have sold down their fleets due to a lack of demand.

Going forward it's going to be vital for anyone selling travel to have close relationships with their key suppliers - an opportunity both for wholesalers and travel agents to truly add value for their clients who can no longer rely on being able to simply book directly and access the accommodation or other travel services they want.

3 CRUISING

FOR the last 18 months or so we've all been telling everyone around us how safe cruising is. We're all exhausted from explaining the incontrovertible evidence about the new protocols, the millions of people who have cruised safely since the pandemic, the vaccination and sanitisation requirements and more, not to mention the thousands of Aussies who rely on cruising for our livelihoods.

Prior to March 2020 we basked in the glow of the global cruise boom, particularly in Australia which

reached the world's highest market penetration. We truly were living in unprecedented times, and those parts of the industry which worked to capitalise on the demand did very well out of it. But then the unfortunate incidents early in the pandemic - remember when we didn't even realise that COVID-19 was airborne! - flipped all that goodwill on its head.

Despite the sensational reporting of incidents such as the *Ruby Princess* in Australia, all of the subsequent official inquiries vindicated the approach taken by the industry. With hundreds of cruise ships put into layup, and thousands upon thousands of crew ultimately repatriated to their home countries, the herculean efforts of the sector have sadly been in many cases unrecognised, not to mention all of the work that has gone into enabling at least some progress in cruise restarts.

However locally it appears to me that authorities, having taken

the blame for missteps early in the pandemic, are absolutely determined to take a measured approach going forward. We can argue the logic of allowing a restart until we are blue in the face, but the bottom line is that cruising is very easily put into the "too hard basket" particularly with the rise of a variant like Omicron and all of the other issues facing our governments who are focused on getting schools open, maintaining supermarket supply chains - oh and the myriad of other issues like foreign policy, defence and that little looming event called a Federal Election.

It's easy to criticise our peak bodies for a perceived failure to facilitate a cruise restart, but it certainly hasn't been for want of trying. There are still politicians in our Federal and State Parliaments who ignorantly describe cruise ships as "floating petri dishes" so we just have to keep chipping away, aware that even the most

logical arguments may fall on deaf ears. As the Doobie Brothers once sang (quoting the Biblical book of Proverbs), "what a fool believes, no wise man has the power to take away".

4 INSURANCE

WE ARE incredibly fortunate in Australia to have universal healthcare, which has meant that most domestic travellers don't worry about travel insurance unless they want to cover cancellations for big ticket items. That's not the case for international travel, of course, and as borders gradually begin to open up travel insurance for outbound trips is increasingly rearing its ugly head as a key issue.

Insurers understandably withdrew all of their products in the early days of the pandemic, as the ever-changing impact of the coronavirus meant it was

impossible to quantify risk. Fortunately as the country moved to the later stages of the national transition plan in the last few months of 2021, a number of insurance providers returned to the market and are once again offering travel insurance for international trips. It should be noted that it was never impossible to get travel insurance even in the darkest, pre-vaccination days of the pandemic - but the coverage did not include COVID-19 related impacts which of course were what most travellers were concerned about.

As increasing numbers of people return to international travel it's likely that the situation will normalise. But the industry must also bear in mind that any insurance product relies on a large market to spread the risk, so a return to pre-pandemic days where insurance was freely and relatively cheaply available may be some way off until travel patterns

return to higher levels.

The other key issue for the parts of the industry which rely on cruise is that most currently available travel insurance products explicitly exclude any coverage for COVID-19 related impacts on cruising. A small number of cruise companies have begun sourcing their own insurance add-ons as a result, and this is a trend that is likely to continue. It's certainly another argument for travel advisors to urge their clients to read the fine print, because it's no longer just activities like hang-gliding, scuba-diving or snowsports that aren't covered in standard policies.

5 TECHNOLOGY

THE final elephant in the travel industry room at the moment is technology - and specifically those three little letters NDC, standing for New Distribution Capability.

Airlines haven't been resting on their digital laurels for the last two years, instead making the most of the breathing space afforded by COVID-19 to pursue an ever-more NDC-centric future.

While this is another area where we can bemoan the strategy and hark back to the glorious green-screen GDS days where fare construction and multi-segment trips were a travel advisor's specialty, the reality is that NDC in all of its various forms is here to stay. Travel distributors who want to access product to sell must have an NDC solution or risk being sidelined.

The positive side of this is that there are an increasing number of aggregators who are offering agents the best of both worlds, accessing content from both traditional sources and direct connections to various airlines. Ignoring this trend is like an ostrich burying your head in the sand hoping the danger will pass.

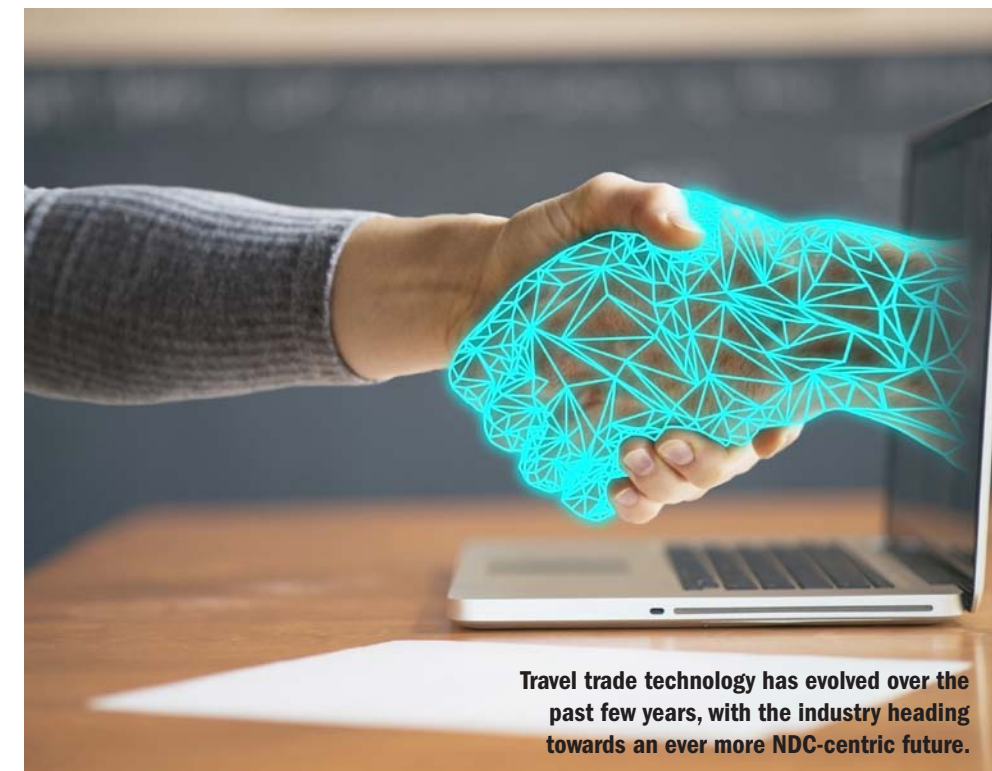


Pre-pandemic Australia experienced a cruise boom like never before. We remember the days of Sydney Harbour being filled with cruise ships in wave season.

“There are still politicians in our Federal and State Parliaments who ignorantly describe cruise ships as “floating petri dishes” so we just have to keep chipping away, aware that even the most logical arguments may fall on deaf ears”



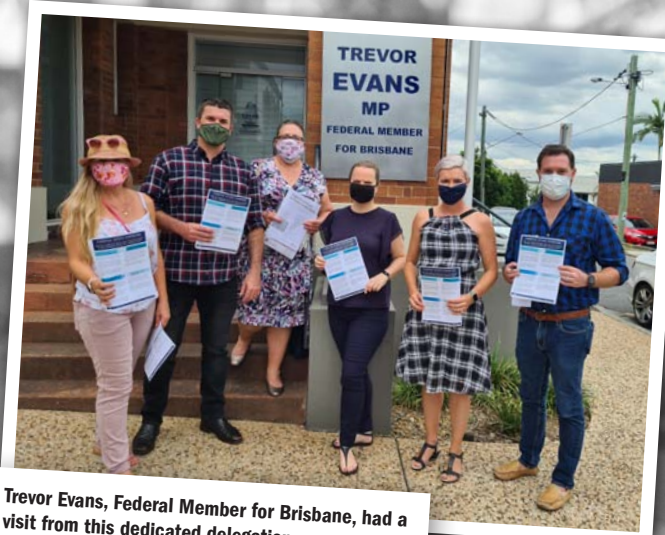
Travel insurance is likely to return to being more available once travel patterns return to higher levels.



Travel trade technology has evolved over the past few years, with the industry heading towards an ever more NDC-centric future.



This group brought messages from CLIA and AFTA to the office of Qld Premier Annastacia Palaszczuk.



Trevor Evans, Federal Member for Brisbane, had a visit from this dedicated delegation.



Taking the clear message to the electoral office of Karen Andrews, Federal Minister for Home Affairs.



Hardy Schneider from Cruise Express with Brad Crawford from Cruise Control Australia at the Sydney office of Communications Minister Paul Fletcher.

INDUSTRY SAYS ENOUGH IS ENOUGH

AFTER two years of being battered by the pandemic, the travel community dared to take charge of its destiny last month, with a grass-roots movement seeing travel agents, suppliers, wholesalers, tour operators and other stakeholders fan out across the country to visit the offices of State and Federal Members of Parliament.

The Day of Action initiative garnered significant mainstream media coverage, with all networks covering reports on the evening news, and since then the campaign has continued with face-to-face meetings in various electorates, all aligned with the key messages being pushed in Canberra

and State capitals by peak bodies including AFTA, CATO and CLIA.

With the current biosecurity ban in place until 17 February and promises from Health Minister Greg Hunt of a regular review, it's hoped the ongoing push will lead to a pathway for cruise resumption, as well as recognition that the travel and tourism sector continue to be battered by COVID-19 even as other parts of the economy recover.

The efforts are being coordinated through the Aussie Travel Action Group on Facebook, with anyone impacted by the travel restrictions and the consequent inability to trade invited to join by [CLICKING HERE](#).



Angie Bell, Federal Member for Moncrieff, posted this image on social media after meeting with industry locals, saying she had gained understanding of their concerns and would "provide advocacy on their behalf and the wider cruising industry".



Susan Haberle from The Inspire Collective speaking outside the Melbourne office of Treasurer Josh Frydenberg.



This group visited Queensland Tourism Minister Stirling Hinchcliffe, who gave a hearing to the representatives from Clean Cruising, CruiseMart, Your Travel & Cruise and MSC Cruises.



Smiling faces from the industry representatives lined up outside the office of NSW Premier, Dominic Perrottet.



Steadfastly bringing the message to Julian Simmonds, Federal Member for the Qld electorate of Ryan.



Terry Smit from Go West Tours describing the decimation of his business to the ABC in Victoria.

GENTING TOPPLES

THE first domino to fall was its shipyard, then in the following weeks Genting Hong Kong endured a series of horrific headlines as the company battled to keep itself afloat under the weight of major financial pressures.

The parent company of cruise brands Crystal Cruises, Dream Cruises and Star Cruises first made news

last month when its German shipbuilding subsidiary MV Werften was forced to file for bankruptcy after failing to reach a bailout agreement with the German Government.

The breakdown has thrown serious doubts over the future of its *Global Dream* vessel which is currently under construction at the shipyard, a major drawcard which was anticipated to enter service for Dream Cruises later this year.

The German Government was scathing in its assessment of the negotiations, claiming they had “pulled out all of the stops” to avoid the shipbuilder going under but that Genting had ultimately refused its help.

For its part, Genting’s President Colin Au said four offers for further financing had been submitted to the German

Government, all of which had been rejected, with a statement from the company claiming the refusal of its loan from Germany was based on a negative business review into the five-year outlook of the company which it felt was not fair or reasonable.

The subsequent fallout has seen Crystal Cruises temporarily suspend its sailings, announcing that ocean and expeditions voyages would be withdrawn until at least 29 April, while river cruises would be out even further until the end of May.

However, things deteriorated even further for the cruise line when its *Crystal Symphony* vessel was diverted to the Bahamas to avoid a US arrest warrant, while sister brand Dream Cruises Holdings Limited has also had provisional liquidators appointed.



Ship is out of this world

VIKING Cruises revealed more details about its soon-to-launch *Viking Neptune* vessel, announcing the ship will be used to undertake the line’s World Cruise in 2023/24.

The 930-passenger ship will depart from Fort Lauderdale for the 138-day mammoth voyage, which boasts 28 country visits, 57 ports and overnight stays in 11 cities.

Neptune, which floated out from Fincantieri’s shipyard in Ancona in the middle of last month, will join an impressive list of ships hitting the water for Viking soon.

“With the arrival of the *Viking Neptune* and her identical sister ship, the *Viking Mars*, this year - along with the debut of our two new expedition ships and new river ships - we are proud to firmly establish Viking as the leading small ship travel company,” Viking Chairman Torstein Hagen said.

The planetary-themed production line includes the launch of *Mars* later this year and the introduction of *Viking Saturn* in 2023.



Viking Neptune floated out last month ©Viking

VIVA LA PRIMA!

BILLED as “the most spacious ship at sea”, Norwegian Cruise Line (NCL) recently unveiled details about its upcoming ship *Norwegian Viva*, which will join the cruise line’s fleet in 2023.

The next vessel due in NCL’s new Prima class of ships, *Viva* will undertake her maiden season from a quadrella of homeports in southern Europe, basing herself out of Lisbon, Venice, Rome and Athens.

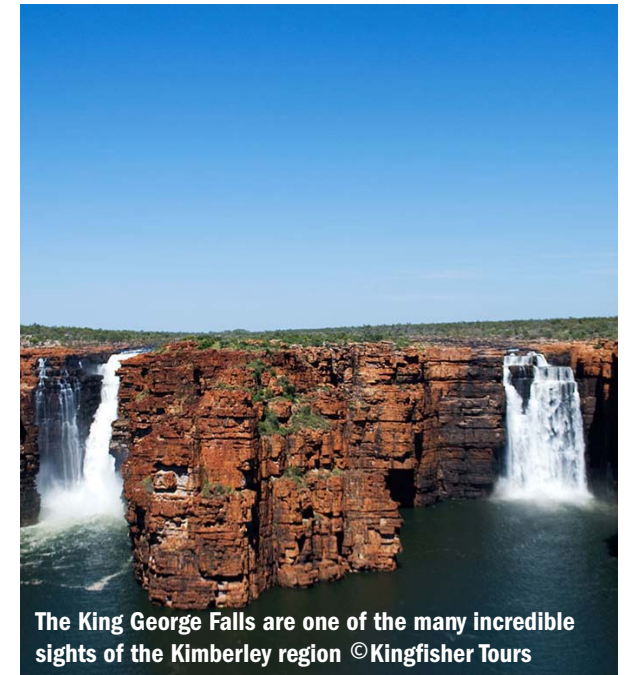
The swanky new ship is a sister to *Norwegian Prima* and boasts a capacity for 3,219 guests with a very high staff-to-guest ratio and ample spaces on board.

Features include 24-hour butler services, exclusive sundeck and pool area, private hot tubs, and a wide array of cabin options, such as balcony, inside, studio, and oceanview accommodation categories.

Experiences on board will include The Rush and The Drop, the fastest freefall drop dry slides at sea, as well as the Viva Speedway, which builds upon the racetrack concept introduced aboard the Breakaway-class.



Rendering of the upcoming *Norwegian Viva* ©NCL



The King George Falls are one of the many incredible sights of the Kimberley region ©Kingfisher Tours

Orion back in Top End

NATIONAL Geographic *Orion* will make a return to the Kimberley after close to a decade absence, with owner Lindblad Expeditions revealing the ship will operate four 11-day sailings in Jul 2023.

Prices for the voyages will lead in at \$13,540ppts, while the ship will also undertake a 15-day cruise departing 08 August exploring the waters off the northwest of Australia and Indonesia, with visits to Komodo National Park and the Rowley Shoals included in the itinerary.

Excursions on offer will include Zodiac trips to check out the mangrove and narrow inlets of the region, while a resident photographer will also be aboard to guide guests through how to take the best nature shots.

In a former life, *Orion* sailed as the flagship of the Sarina Bratton-founded Orion Expedition Cruises until the line was purchased by Lindblad in 2013.

In further news, Lindblad Expeditions has also launched a number of voyages in New Zealand, including coastal itineraries visiting the Milford Sound, Dusky Sound and Stewart Island.

Bookings on the newly announced Kimberley program are open now and can be made by calling local representative Adventure World on 1300 363 055.

GALAPAGOS PROTECTION

ONE of expedition cruises' jewels in the crown has secured an important environmental protection, with Ecuadorian President Lasso Guillermo announcing an expansion of the Galapagos Marine Reserve.

The initiative will see the area expanded by 60,000 square kilometres and ensure a secure pathway for the unique marine life that traverses water channels between the Galapagos and Costa Rica's Cocos Islands.

"Together, Costa Rica and Ecuador now work to connect two of the world's most biologically significant and productive marine habitats," Guillermo said, adding that other nations around the world should join the charge to preserve the ocean habitats which are increasingly under threat from climate change and human incursions.

The important declaration was attended by Aurora Expeditions brand ambassador Dr Sylvia Earle, as well as Lindblad Expeditions founder Sven Lindblad and swinging saxophonist and former US President Bill Clinton.



Unique marine life that will be further protected by the expansion of the Galapagos Marine Reserve include sea lions, blue-footed boobies, and the Galápagos marine iguana, pictured here.



Scenic gets second chance

IT WILL be the ultimate homecoming for Scenic Tours in 2024 with the Aussie cruise line planning to finally sail a ship in local waters as part of its 2023/24 ocean cruising program.

The highly anticipated *Scenic Eclipse II* Discovery Yacht will offer guests the chance of voyaging from Newcastle with founder Glen Moroney on board, the city where the company was forged 36 years ago, with Scenic's GM of Sales and Marketing Anthony Laver labelling the departure a

"major moment" in the line's history.

Making it particularly special is the plan to make amends for a scuttled Kimberley season last year, a well subscribed sailing that was ultimately scrapped due to COVID restrictions.

The overall program will feature 85 itineraries sailing to more than 50 countries across all seven continents, with the addition of South Pacific voyages complementing Antarctica, the Arctic, Mediterranean and the Americas.

Get Carter

CHIMU Expeditions co-founder Greg Carter has assumed the position of Chief Commercial Officer for Albatros Expeditions following an 18-month hiatus from the travel industry.

He was previously in a Director/CEO role at the Mawson's Huts Foundation, and will maintain a part-time position at the charity while he recommences his participation in the travel sector at Albatros.

Azzurra eventually

SCENIC Group has confirmed *Emerald Azzurra* will finally commence operations on 11 March from Aqaba, Jordan, seven months later than originally scheduled.

The cruise line said it was forced to make the "difficult decision to adjust the inaugural sailings of our new luxury yacht", stating the continually changing travel landscape brought on by the pandemic had left it with little alternative but to delay the launch.

Cruising to victory

A VOLUNTARY framework has replaced strict cruising regulations in the United States, with CLIA hailing the decision as a belated victory for the sector which has fought tooth and nail for clear resumption conditions.

"[The move] recognises the cruise industry's unwavering commitment to providing some of the highest levels of COVID-19 mitigation found in any industry," CLIA stated.

Under the new voluntary COVID-19 program, cruise lines can opt in to follow all of the CDC recommendations and guidance, and participating vessels will continue to receive a colour status based on the level of coronavirus infection.



CLIA VIEW

Joel Katz, Managing Director
CLIA Australasia

AFTER TWO YEARS, IT'S TIME FOR ACTION

AFTER almost two years, cruising is now the only Australian industry still subject to a Federal ban, despite our successful revival in more than 80 other countries.

Tens of thousands of new COVID-19 cases are being reported each day on land in Australia as we learn to live with the virus, yet the cruise industry is still being treated differently, even with its much higher standard of health protocols.

Since 2020, CLIA has been highlighting the enormous economic cost of the cruise ban on thousands of travel agents, suppliers and other Australian businesses.

This has been one of our core messages, conveyed through countless government meetings, presentations, television interviews and social media initiatives.

In recent weeks, Australian politicians have been shown the real faces behind this economic impact, as teams of travel agents and suppliers converged on MPs' offices around the country. Through vigils, meetings

and media interviews, our MPs have been reminded that the 18,000 Australians who rely on cruising for their livelihoods are real people and real voters.

To maintain the pressure, CLIA and cruise lines have redoubled lobbying efforts and are calling for government action.

We are calling for a phased resumption of cruising by the second quarter of 2022, as well as financial support for businesses that rely on cruising, and the removal of the Passenger Movement Charge once borders fully open.

Despite our industry's success around the world, Australia still poses a political challenge unlike any other major market. But through the united voice established across our cruise community, we are having a real impact on the way politicians regard our industry.

As we approach two years without cruising, we need this translated into real action by governments.

Our calls are louder than ever. It's time to open the door to cruising.



HEADLINES JANUARY 2022

- 07 Jan** Norwegian Australian season cancelled
- 12 Jan** Genting's shipyards go bankrupt
- 13 Jan** Norwegian unveils new ship Viva
- 20 Jan** Crystal pauses cruises

[illegible]

Travel Daily

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