

Scurrah hits back

VIRGIN Australia has lodged a formal complaint with the ACCC about comments made by Qantas CEO Alan Joyce earlier this week on VA's financial state.

Speaking to *ABC News* today, Virgin Australia Managing Director Paul Scurrah said "I've been in Canberra advocating for the whole sector to be supported and I think that's the sort of behaviour we want to see".

"I think if people don't link arms and don't come together then that's unAustralian."

He stayed tight-lipped on if the airline was asking foreign investors - like Etihad and Singapore Airlines - to pump more money into it but noted "any responsible CEO would be looking at all forms of capital and making sure it is available if, and when needed".

Flight Centre slashes costs

STAFF cuts, 250 store closures and suspension of all promotional activity are among radical actions announced today by Flight Centre Travel Group (**TD** breaking news) as the company continues to grapple with the COVID-19 crisis.

About 6,000 support and sales roles globally will be stood down or become redundant, including around 3,800 people in Australia who will be stood down.

FCTG will initially retain up to 70% of its global workforce.

CEO Graham Turner hailed the tireless work of the company's employees assisting stranded customers in recent days, but said "unfortunately the vast proportion of the work that they would normally undertake has now stopped."

"As a result, we have been forced to make extremely difficult decisions, including temporarily standing down some of our people and cancelling our

interim dividend, with a view to preserving more jobs for the future," he said.

Other major expenses on the chopping block include FCTG's \$15 million monthly sales and marketing spend, rental costs and the planned closure of 250 stores nationwide across a range of brands, part of a global 35% cut to FC's leisure retail footprint.

Turner said FCTG had proactively engaged with a large pool of other prospective employers to secure immediate access to over 10,000 sales & call centre vacancies for stood down staff, as well as seeking rapid access to benefits.

All senior executives and Board members are on half pay, with no bonus payments to be made.

Turner said FCTG was also well-progressed in pursuing initiatives to boost its liquidity, but in the meantime its voluntary share trading suspension remains in place.

Mental health hub

THE Travel Industry Hub's next online session will be a discussion about Men's Mental Health with Walter Nand at 11am tomorrow.

Take part by connecting through thetravelindustryhub.com, where all of the previous Industry Survey and Revive Sessions are also available for viewing.

Future sessions are planned around business, wellbeing, LinkedIn and more.

No disembarking

NSW Premier Gladys Berejiklian has announced a halt on cruise ship disembarkation while the government works through new measures, following the *Ruby Princess* COVID-19 debacle.

"I do not want any further action taken in relation to releasing any passenger from any boat in Sydney until we get a tick off from all authorities on the new protocols moving forward," she told media this morning.

Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today has four pages of news.

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Having trouble choosing between Phuket and Koh Samui? See the differences in the March issue of *travelBulletin*.

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Bangkok rescue

QANTAS will operate a one-off service between Bangkok and Sydney tomorrow night to help repatriate Australian travellers stranded in Thailand.

The country's capital is set to be cut off, with strict transit conditions already in place (more on **page three**) and Thai Airways suspending flights from Bangkok to Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Perth and Auckland and a resumption currently scheduled for 01 Jul, but with reduced frequencies.

The special one-off Qantas service will depart Bangkok this Fri 27 Mar at 6pm, arriving into Sydney at 7.30am on Sat.

It can only be booked by calling Qantas in Bangkok directly on +66 02 632 6611.

Aussie Dream cancelled

DREAM Cruises yesterday confirmed the withdrawal of its planned 2020/21 *Explorer Dream* deployment in local waters due to ongoing concerns surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic.

Dream Cruises VP of Sales & Marketing ANZ Brigita Devries said the news meant all voyages scheduled to depart between 08 Oct 2020 and 13 Mar 2021 had been cancelled.

"We are deeply saddened by this decision, however we must take these extraordinary precautionary measures in order to limit the spread of the virus and play our part in recovery.

"We hope that by acting early,

we will minimise the number of passengers affected," she said.

Impacted guests will have the option of receiving a refund or a future cruise credit towards any Dream Cruises voyage until 31 Dec 2021 plus an additional \$250 on board credit.

Devries said while *Explorer Dream* would not return to Australia and NZ in the immediate future, "we will be back".

MEANWHILE Carnival Australia has not commented on plans for the local deployments of its Princess Cruises vessels, after yesterday announcing an extension to its suspension of Australasian cruising for P&O Cruises and Carnival Cruise Line.

In Australia P&O plans to resume operations on 15 May, while NZ P&O voyages are suspended until 30 Jun in line with NZ Government restrictions.

P&O has also cancelled its State of Origin and Taste of Tasmania (formerly Dark Mofo) voyages.

Carnival Cruise Line also plans to return to cruising in Australia on 15 May.

More in today's *Cruise Weekly*.

QR lifts capacity

QATAR Airways has this week bucked the global trend to wind back aviation, stepping up with the addition of 10,000 additional seats to its network.

The airline has been operating charter services to Europe and the USA from Asia, as well as putting on additional frequencies to Paris, Dublin and Perth.

Services have also been upgraded to larger capacity A380s on Frankfurt, London Heathrow and Perth.

The carrier said it had recorded load factors of over 80% on flights to the UK, France and Germany, compared to 36% on outbound services from those countries, illustrating the heavy demand for homeward travel.

"Qatar Airways has flown more than 100,000 passengers home in the last seven days, while 72% of passengers carried on 24 Mar were nationals flying to their country of origin," QR said.

The carrier has worked with embassies across the globe to operate one-off flights from destinations such as Phnom Penh, Denpasar, Manila and Kuala Lumpur to Europe, and continues to fly to 75 destinations, although this may reduce as nations add more travel restrictions.



Window Seat

A SMALL Austrian village is set to significantly rethink its visitor marketing strategy - or perhaps they should just give up.

Sankt Corona am Wechsel has been attracting some unwanted attention in recent weeks, with the COVID-19 pandemic and online searches for "corona" seeing traffic to the destination's website soar.

"At first we smiled to see a virus named like the village, but jokes have stopped since the epidemic became so serious," said Mayor Michael Gruber.

"We'll probably have to find a new name for our mascot," he

added, with promotional collateral for the eco-tourism hotspot featuring a cartoon ant



in traditional costume (**above**) - unfortunately named "Corona".

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Brands and the future

OPINION

Neil Stollznow is a Director of Stollznow Research, a leading research and insights advisory that has a speciality in visitor and travel research and has provided this comment on how to prepare your brand during the COVID-19 crisis.



SINCE World War II, international travel has never had a significant decline in any year, no matter what was happening across the globe...until now. As of 24 Mar international travel has been banned, interstate and even intrastate travel is severely restricted, and there is now effectively no travel industry.

This situation will not last forever. People love to travel, and no matter how long the travel shutdown lasts the industry will recover and prosper.

So what should brands do? After the difficult decisions have been made, if an organisation is confident that it can survive until better times come along, it should not forget about its brand

presence.

Our research shows that the people who love travel the most are those who work in the travel industry. The travel agents and others who are your customers will be the same people who will return to work when the pandemic ends and the industry resumes operation. They are the future for your brand.

Throughout the shutdown prepare your brand for this future market with three simple brand messages: we share your pain, this situation will end, and we will stay in business. In an uncertain world providing certainty that your business will still be there in the future will give reassurance. This positive communication will be remembered when the industry commences again.

Online conference

A GLOBAL travel conference called OTC will take place online on 22-23 Apr to prepare the industry for after COVID-19.

It is co-organised by Avian CEO Mickey Haslavsky - more **HERE**.

APPOINTMENTS

WELCOME to Industry Appointments, *Travel Daily's* Thursday feature which has the latest job appointments from across the industry. If you have just appointed someone to a new position and would like to update the industry email appointments@traveldaily.com.au.

MGM Resorts International has announced COO and President **Bill Hornbuckle** will take on the role of acting CEO, replacing CEO and Chairman **Jim Murren**, who has stepped down. Member of the MGM Resorts Board of Directors **Paul Salem** will replace Murren as the Chair of the Board of Directors.

There's a new face at the **The Fullerton Hotel Sydney**, with **Andrew Adams** stepping into the role of Director of Operations at the property. Adams brings over 25 years of hospitality experience to the role.

AYANA Hotels has revealed a series of appointments in Bali. In AYANA Hotels in Bali, **Stefan Fuchs** has been appointed Hotel Manager, while **Michi Sonoda** has stepped into the role of Executive Assistant Manager, Sales and Marketing. **Patrick Callarec** has been named Executive Chef, **Manik Sudarsana** as EAM Food & Beverage and **Ahmed El Sandoby** as Director of Wellness and Spa.

Miami Beach's **Carillon Miami Wellness Resort** has taken on **Patrick Fernandes** as Executive Managing Director and member of the Board of Managers, effective immediately.



Agents worm their way out



WHEN life gives you er, worms, make castings!

These inventive agents at travelexperience.com.au in Atherton responded quickly to people panic buying seeds by selling worm castings.

"Great for growing veggies and flowers!" travelexperience.com.au Director Uli Lenitschek told *Travel Daily*.

Travel Experts Ash Fabiani and Mannuela Arcidiacono are pictured showcasing their wares.

TC postpones

TRAVEL Counsellors (TC) has postponed its 2020 conference, which was scheduled to be held in Perth in Jun, with a new date to be revealed "as soon as it is feasible".

TC Regional Managing Director Kaylene Shuttlewood said "without a doubt our industry is struggling through a very challenging time, and it is important that we support each other and our supplier partners to get through to the other side together".

Thailand transit ok

SMARTTRAVELLER has confirmed transit passengers with a layover in Thailand of no more than 24-hours are exempt from new COVID-19 medical certification and insurance requirements, but they will still need a medical certificate indicating they are fit to fly.

All other travellers to Thailand will need a medical certificate confirming they don't have COVID-19 and an insurance policy with at least US\$100,000 for medical coverage for COVID-19.



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I'd like to be, under the sea



PASSIONS of Paradise staff have been putting their extra time to good use since the Cairns company stopped running tours due to the COVID-19 pandemic, by volunteering to help plant coral on the Great Barrier Reef.

CEO Scott Garden said the family-owned company had donated the catamaran *Passions III* and fuel to take four crew and a scientist to Hastings Reef for the Coral Nurture Program.

"We have been assisting Dr David Suggett's team from the University of Technology Sydney who are conducting reef resilience research at one of our 26 reef sites," he said.

"I have been working with Passions of Paradise Environmental Sustainability Coordinator Russell Hosp at the site most weeks recording data for the project and establishing a coral nursery."

Passions of Paradise is one of five Cairns and Port Douglas reef

companies participating, with Wavelength, Ocean Freedom, Sailaway and Quicksilver Cruises also involved.

Paradise Environmental Sustainability Coordinator Russell Hosp is **pictured** with Project coordinator and PhD student Lorna Howlett yesterday.

Photo credit: Diveplanit.

Digital marketing

TRAVEL training operator Tourism Tribe is running a three-month online digital marketing program from next week.

The course aims to keep operators motivated, connect them to industry colleagues and upgrade their marketing and digital assets over the quiet period due to COVID-19.

The first session will teach operators how to secure and protect their business against digital scams and manage remote teams - for more, **CLICK HERE**.

Inspire your clients' next holiday

Check out the Autumn edition of *Travel & Cruise Weekly*

Air NZ flying on

AIR New Zealand will continue to operate a limited international network from 30 Mar to 31 May, to enable essential travel and keep air freight moving.

Domestic services into Auckland will allow pax to connect onto Tasman and Pacific routes where required, with weekly schedules including just seven return trans-Tasman flights, three services to Los Angeles, two to Hong Kong and three to Shanghai.

US training webinar

CANUCKIWI is hosting six US destination webinars to help agents upskill over the quiet period.

Each webinar will be hosted by an in-market member of the tourism board and participants will earn additional points on their Sell Your Way to the USA tally sheets that count towards qualifying for a spot on famils scheduled for late 2020.

To register, **CLICK HERE**.

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