

Rally postponed

A MAJOR grassroots travel and cruise sector rally planned for Sydney this weekend (TD 04 Jan) has been postponed due to the distraction caused by rising Omicron numbers across the city.

Rally organiser Belle Goldie from itravel Penrith said the delay would not reduce the potency of the event's message.

"If anything, the postponement will serve to amplify the issues we have raised behind the scenes, as we have been doing all along, and getting in front of the media and people who need to hear our stories," she said.

"We want to make sure your frustration is heard over the ineffective support for the travel sector and related small businesses so that we have some certainty and are no longer blindsided by government decisions," Goldie added.

A new date for the protest is yet to be formalised.

Testing protocols eased

PRIME Minister Scott Morrison has announced that travellers arriving in Australia from overseas will now face less COVID-19 testing protocols.

The PM confirmed that there will no longer be a requirement for a second COVID test post-arrival for those returning or arriving from overseas, so long as a traveller's rapid antigen test result is negative on arrival.

Morrison rationalised the move on the basis of a very low rate of positive cases being identified on arrival from overseas, as well as the dominant strain Omicron being milder than other variants.

"Cases are community transmission - that's where the greatest risks are," he said.

However Qld will keep the PCR requirement in place until it reaches the target of 90% of the state being double vaccinated.

On the domestic front, Morrison also confirmed all states are

"moving away" from needing a negative RAT result for interstate travel, except for WA which was not in attendance at the National Cabinet Meeting.

Qld and Tasmania are expected to make that transition in the coming weeks, while other states have agreed to make the changes imminently.

UK scraps isolation

UK PRIME Minister Boris Johnson has announced that travellers arriving in England will no longer have to isolate until they get a negative PCR test, and instead will only have to take a lateral flow test at the end of day two after arrival.

The policy change follows calls from Airlines UK and the Manchester Airports Group to remove of all COVID testing restrictions, stating the measures have no impact on case numbers.

Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today has four pages of news.

Rocky appoints CEO

ROCKY Mountaineer has named a new President and CEO, revealing David McKenna has joined the team this week.

McKenna arrives at the Canadian luxury rail service from the Tourism Industry Association of Canada, where he spent six years on the Board.

"David is no stranger to the impact the pandemic has had on tourism, and his experience and fortitude in strengthening business foundations, identifying, and developing new tourism opportunities, and engaging and coaching team members will be essential to the long-term success of this company," Rocky Mountaineer founder Peter Armstrong said.

More appointments on P4.

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How has the pandemic impacted the way the travel sector operates, and what will remain in the emerging post-covid world? We investigate taking travel back to the future in the latest *travelBulletin*.

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travelBulletin



Window Seat

THERE are so many travel gems left on the bucket list of Aussies that many are simply 'sweating' on the chance of travelling overseas again.

Well, now there's a chance to wipe away two goals with the one swipe, following news that Michigan State University's Abrams Planetarium has become the new home of a Moist Towelette Museum.

The unusual collection compiled by the attraction's Production Coordinator, John French, contains thousands of wipes, some used, from all over the world.

Some of the towelettes serve a specific purpose, such as denture cleaning, removing tar from shoes or wiping away radioactive contamination.



NCL cancellations

DUE to ongoing uncertainty around the resumption of cruises in Australia, and in support of a gradual redeployment of its fleet, Norwegian Cruise Line has postponed *Norwegian Spirit's* debut Down Under until Dec, cancelling the remainder of its current local season.

"We appreciate the patience and understanding of our guests and travel partners with impacted bookings and apologize for any inconvenience caused," a spokesperson for Norwegian told *Travel Daily*.

More cancellations around the world were announced by Norwegian today - see **CW**.

New protocols, same Bula spirit



WHEN TravelManagers' Belinda Hackett visited Fiji last month on the first flight to the country since services were halted by the pandemic, the experience was both professional and personal.

"It's been a long time between cocktails, and I couldn't wait to return to this beautiful destination which has been so special to me and my customers over many years as a travel agent," she enthused.

Part of the trip was a reconnaissance for Hackett, who wanted to see for herself what measures Fiji had put in place to protect the health and safety of her clients on future trips.

"Protecting visitors against COVID-19 is taken very seriously

in Fiji," Hackett confirmed, adding "there are temperature check stations, hand sanitising stations and even resort COVID staff who are there to answer any questions and provide all possible assistance. The resorts even have their own doctors and COVID-safe officers available on site to administer rapid tests and PCR testing prior to leaving."

Pictured: TravelManagers' Belinda Hackett was greeted with warmth by the cabin crew on her Fiji Airways flight from Sydney.

Hamilton impacted

HAMILTON Island has cancelled holiday home stays, as COVID staff shortages cripple operations.

Guest arrivals to holiday homes managed by Hamilton Island have been cancelled for the next two weeks, with the destination saying isolation requirements were behind the decision.

"The HIE housekeeping department has been particularly hard hit with large numbers of staff now in isolation," a spokesperson told News Corp.

Hong Kong tightens

HONG Kong has banned passenger flights from eight countries, including Australia, for a minimum of two weeks as it continues to take a strong stance on limiting the spread of the Omicron variant.

Travellers will be prohibited from entry to Hong Kong if they have been in any of the eight countries listed, even in cases where people have only transited through airports.

Other banned countries on the list include the US, the UK, Canada, France and India.

PAL reemerges

PHILIPPINE Airlines has exited bankruptcy, successfully completing its financial restructuring within four months.

The airline said it had streamlined its operations with a reorganised fleet, and is now better suited for future growth.

Philippine Airlines credited the strong support of its creditors and shareholders, the cooperation of its industry partners and the collective efforts of its employees around the world, who sustained flights on multiple international and domestic routes.

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AUSTRALIA READY TO TAKE AIME

ASIA Pacific Incentives and Meetings Event (AIME) has confirmed that close to all of Australia's Convention Bureaux will be participating in the major Asia Pacific meetings and conventions event which kicks off in Melbourne on 21 Mar.

Representing approximately 1,800 tourism and events operators, the Association of Australian Convention Bureaux (AACB) plans to use the forum as a launch pad for the events industry's much-needed recovery.

"AIME's role in our business events recovery is pivotal for reigniting rich business connections between organisers and suppliers," AACB CEO Andrew Hiebl said.

"All our mainland members will be exhibiting at AIME 2022, and that's a great sign of business



confidence, human spirit, and commitment to industry."

One returning attendee will be Destination Gold Coast, the sponsor of AIME's Knowledge Program this year, with CEO Patricia O'Callaghan stating the gathering will be vital for the tropical destination to flex its muscle as a prime location to host future events.

"It's been a while since Gold

Coast has attended AIME as a collective and we're delighted to be back," she said.

"At AIME we will be launching our new brand and sharing with our customers what they can expect from us as a destination."

AIME takes place at the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre in person on 21-23 Mar and from 28 Mar to 01 Apr online.

Geelong funding

THE Victorian Government has committed an extra \$120 million to help enhance the Geelong Convention and Exhibition Centre precinct.

The additional funding follows a previous \$174 million government injection announced in 2019, with the new tranche of funds to be used to construct a 200-room luxury hotel, as well as retail and commercial spaces.

The build will take place on Deakin University's current carpark site.

"A centre of this size located on Geelong's spectacular waterfront will be a magnet to events of all sizes from across the state, the country and internationally," Geelong MP Christine Couzens said.

Western Australia scores a major try



WESTERN Australia has secured the Golden Oldies World Rugby Festival in a major boost to its events economy.

Perth will host the event in 2023, which is expected to attract about 2,000 visitors.

Supported by the Government of Western Australia through Tourism WA, the festival has been secured for the state for the first time in more than 30 years as part

of Western Australia's events strategy to boost tourism and increase economic activity.

The Golden Oldies World Rugby Festival will be held from 19 to 26 Mar, 2023 at Langley Park in Perth.

It will combine social and competitive grade games for players and tourism experiences for the visitors, and is expected to generate \$5.7 million in economic impact.

WA GETS BACK ON THE ROAD

THE Government of Western Australia has announced financial support for large festivals impacted by restrictions.

Events forced to cancel will be eligible to apply under a revamped 'Getting the Show Back on the Road' support program.

Eligibility guidelines have been adjusted to ensure events impacted over this 11-day period can be covered.

Getting the Show Back on the Road will support 75% of box office loss for cancelled events, capped at \$150,000.

Consideration will be given for larger events to be exempt from the cap on a case-by-case basis, pending a detailed assessment.

"I acknowledge that with that has come some understandable frustration from sections of the WA economy, and that's why we have developed an enhanced financial support package," said WA Premier Mark McGowan.

"The comprehensive package is designed to provide some assistance to those businesses

that have been directly impacted by public health rules or forced closures and cancellations."

Western Australia's Targeted Small Business Assistance Grants program will also open this month, with businesses impacted by public health rules eligible to receive up to \$12,500.

The Grants program is open to eligible businesses - including creative & performing arts, catering, rental & hiring services and other hospitality businesses which can demonstrate a reduction in turnover of at least 30% compared to the corresponding 11-day period last year in which public health rules were in place in Perth and Peel.

Small businesses will be able to apply online **HERE**, with grant payments expected to commence by the end of the month.

Free Small Business Financial Counselling Services have also been extended into the new year.

MEANWHILE grants of up to \$100,000 are also available for impacted events in SA.



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IHG adds Bangkok

IHG Hotels & Resorts has announced the Sindhorn Midtown hotel in Bangkok will join its luxury and lifestyle portfolio in Mar.

The 393-key property joins a strong pipeline of IHG properties in Thailand, with 34 hotels slated to open in the future and 29 already in operation.

Royal asks for input

ROYAL Caribbean has started surveying its Pinnacle Club members for advice on what to call its next Oasis Class ship.

Some of the short-listed names for loyal customers to choose from include: Magnificence of the Seas, Haven of the Seas, Melody of the Seas, Utopia of the Seas and Paradise of the Seas.

The yet-to-be-named vessel will be the sixth in Royal's Oasis Class, and will follow *Wonder of the Seas* which will be due to make its maiden voyage later this year.

Air NZ the safest

AIR New Zealand has come out on top of AirlineRatings.com's latest safety review list, placing the Kiwi carrier ahead of 384 other airlines on the basis of key health and safety criteria.

Factors included in the rankings were airlines' crash and serious incident records, the age of their aircraft, as well as COVID-19 health protocols.

Air New Zealand replaced Qantas in the number one spot, with the Aussie airline dropping out of the top five altogether as a result of its fleet age and a slight increase in mid-air incidents.

Brazil cruise pause

CRUISE Lines International Association (CLIA) members have paused in Brazil to seek "alignment with authorities" on COVID protocols.

CLIA members are voluntarily suspending operations until 21 Jan, citing differing interpretation.

THE mountain gazelle is often known by another name (which if we told you would give away whose national animal it is).

They are one of the few mammals where both sexes have horns, though males' are much larger with rings around them and females have thinner, shorter ones.

Mountain gazelles are live in dry, desert-like conditions in mountains and hills, which this country has plenty of, although they are considered endangered, with less than 3,000 in their natural range which covers Israel, Turkey and Jordan.

Whose animal is this?

Answer: Mountain gazelle - Israel

Accor's Angkor

TO CELEBRATE the return of travellers able to enter Cambodia, Accor has also launched a short-film entitled *Unveil Cambodia*, designed to inspire travellers to rediscover the country.

Cambodia is now open to vaccinated international travellers without quarantine, a country famed for its awe-inspiring temples of Angkor, pristine beaches and bustling food scene.

To watch Accor's new short-film about Cambodia, **CLICK HERE**.

W Nanjing flagged

MARRIOTT International has announced plans to open the 257-room W Nanjing in China in 2025, to be located along the banks of the Yangtze River.

The property will also offer guests four restaurants and bars, including a signature destination bar that will serve as a daytime playground and social hub.

A fitness centre and expansive pool and spa areas are also slated in the plans, as well as a large multifunctional events space.



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.

After seven-and-a-half years at Brunel Worldwide Chauffeur Drive, **Kevin Millard** is now the Sales Manager Travel & Tourism with NSBC Group, operator of the Sydney Super Shuttle. While at Brunel, Millard also oversaw airport shuttle service Ready2GO.

With **Tweet World Travel Group's** global expansion, it has promoted Susan Frisby-Smith to a new position as Head of Worldwide Business Development. Frisby-Smith was formerly Tweet World's Senior Business Development Executive, and prior to that, worked at TKG Platform.

COMO Hotels & Resorts has appointed Doris Goh as Vice President Commercial. In her new role, Goh will be responsible for driving and managing the overall commercial components of COMO, bringing the company's sales and marketing functions together.

TA courts Japan

TOURISM Australia (TA) recently hosted a webinar in Japan to boost awareness of tourism and hospitality jobs opportunities in Australia for Japanese working holiday makers.

Japanese working holiday tourists historically account for around 30,800 visitations to Australia each year, contributing roughly \$307 million to the country's visitor economy.