

Airlines get King hit

FEDERAL Transport Minister Catherine King has pulled no punches in her assessment of the tardy times Aussie carriers posted in Nov (**TD** 21 Dec), labelling the month “very disappointing”.

“It is no wonder so many Australians remain fed up with our major airlines,” King said in a reactive statement to the results released yesterday.

“As Australians gear up to travel for Christmas and the holidays, the government will be keeping a close eye on the performance of all our major airlines,” she added.

King also alluded to more accountability for Australian carriers through the *Aviation White Paper* which is due to be handed down in mid 2024.

“This [*White Paper*] will include consideration of how we can better protect the interests of consumers, whether that be a stronger ombudsman model or other measures implemented in overseas jurisdictions,” King said.

“Like all Australians, the government wants an aviation sector that supports our nation’s way of life and this means services need to be reliable, competitive and affordable.”

Virgin Australia was the worst performer in Nov, with only 54.3% of flights arriving on time.



APT ready for evolution

EXCLUSIVE

GENERATIONAL change at the top of APT Travel Group has seen long-serving patriarch of the business Geoff McGeary step away to make way for his children Rob McGeary and Lou Tandy - but don’t call it a transition, McGeary stresses, it’s an evolution.

Speaking with **TD** this week, both McGeary and Tandy said that while they are excited by the prospect of taking APT into the next phase, the core DNA of the company will remain the same.

“We will be constantly innovating and progressing the business but the fundamental values, objectives and structure of the business has not changed,” McGeary said.

“My father was really good at bringing product development and innovation to the fore and we will continue to bring those strengths to the business but it will be the great people at our company who will help with the implementation, execution, governance and financial

management,” he added.

Both siblings were also keen to highlight the important role travel agents have played in the company’s previous success - and that ethos will not be changing.

“While there are lots of things that are evolving in our business through generational change, innovation, changes across products and so on, one thing that is certain is our support of travel agents,” Tandy said.

“We have been preferred partners with every major travel agency group for over five decades, we’ve got one of the largest sales teams in Australia with 18 BDMs on the road - so our support for travel agents is stronger than ever and our breadth of product is another great advantage for our agency partners,” Tandy added.

Stay up-to-date with **travelBulletin** for the full story about APT’s exciting evolution. **AB**

Today’s issue of TD

Travel Daily today features five pages of news plus a full page from **A Force for Good**.

VA short-haul plan



VIRGIN Australia has confirmed plans to grow its international short-haul network as it progressively receives new Boeing 737 MAX aircraft over the next two years.

The ambition was expressed in a statement issued by the carrier’s General Manager Airport Experience, Paul Woosnam (**pictured**) yesterday, who underscored the importance of regional international flights to VA’s future growth ambitions.

“There are plans to grow in this area as we receive our new fleet of fuel-efficient aircraft, presenting great opportunities for Virgin Australia, as well as opportunities for our people to grow & develop,” Woosnam said.

The comments coincided with a decision by the airline to insource its Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne international baggage handling operations in early 2024.

“We previously committed to review all opportunities that made good business sense and this is a great example of our business delivering opportunities for our people,” Woosnam said.

See you on 02 Jan!

JUST a reminder to our wonderful and loyal readers that **Travel Daily** will be taking a brief pause from publishing until 02 Jan next year, in the meantime our entire team wish you all the very best during the holiday break and, of course, gifts from that mysterious and jolly Santa Claus character.


NCL at half price

NORWEGIAN Cruise Line (NCL) is offering guests up to 50% off all cruises & bonus \$500 discounts on sailings booked before 04 Jan.

The special New Year’s Sale is able to be used in conjunction with the cruise line’s popular ‘Free at Sea’ promotion, and applies to sailings worldwide.

\$500 stateroom discounts exclude sailaway categories and *Norwegian Spirit* departures between 04 Jan and 16 Mar.



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It's unconscionable: Rex

REX Airlines has joined Federal Transport Minister Catherine King in taking aim at the poor schedule performance of its rivals (see [page one](#)), suggesting Qantas and Virgin Australia are showing a “deliberate disregard and neglect

Nov numbers for SYD close to 2019

SYDNEY Airport's international terminal saw 1.26 million pax pass through its gates in Nov, representing a 29.8% increase on the same month last year and a significant 93% recovery rate when compared to Nov 2019.

Meanwhile, domestic passenger traffic during the same period was up by 7.8% on the same month in 2022, with 2.15 million pax coming through the T2 and T3 domestic terminals.

Interestingly, Chinese travellers moved up to second spot in terms of being the most common nationality passing through Sydney's gates, but was still trailing 2019 levels by 25%.

While most of the big markets were shown to be lagging behind pre-pandemic volumes such as the United States, New Zealand and the UK, the figures also showed some promising signs for more developing markets.

There were 29% more South Korean nationals processed through Sydney in Nov versus 2019, while India and the Philippines both enjoyed an 8% spike in passenger numbers.

of the travelling public”.

The airline's Chairman, John Sharp, lambasted the poor on-time and cancellation rates at Sydney Airport in particular, alleging the two carriers were engaging in an effective domestic duopoly at the hub.

“When we focus on domestic operations out of Sydney Airport, the figures are even more damning of the two larger carriers,” Sharp said.

“These disproportionately high cancellation rates at Sydney Airport of the two larger carriers clearly demonstrate their blatant efforts at gaming the Sydney Airport slots system.

“They schedule flights they have no intention of flying in order to preserve historical precedence on the slots, then cancelling them at last minute,” he added.

Rex pointed to the country's busiest route as the most compelling evidence of the alleged gaming of slots, with VA scrapping 12.5% of its Sydney-Melbourne services in Nov, exceedingly higher than Rex's 0.75% of flights.

Meanwhile Qantas also canned 8% of its MEL-SYD services.

“Both carriers' cancellation rate on the Sydney-Melbourne route are at twice their national average...it just goes to show that if you want to reach your destination with a minimum of fuss...be able to pick up your luggage, the choice is obvious - fly Rex,” Sharp quipped. *AB*

Have a bite with Mangan



CELEBRATED Australian chef Luke Mangan has launched a new restaurant concept at Sydney Airport today called Luke's Bistro & Bar, which is located in the T3 domestic terminal.

The new 200-person capacity dining venue offers travellers the choice of bar seating for those on the go, as well as booths and tables for people looking to enjoy the full menu and wine list.

“Luke's Bistro and Bar is for everyone, whether you want to come in and enjoy a full breakfast, lunch or dinner, or just grab a quick bite and go,” Mangan enthused, adding the open style of the venue would also be perfect for those looking for a little extra social connection before boarding their flights.

Sydney Airport's Executive GM Commercial, Mark Zaou, observed the new venue will add a “touch of gourmet flair” to Australia's largest aviation hub.

“Luke's reputation as a renowned Australian chef and restaurateur precedes him, and



we are excited to showcase his culinary expertise to domestic travellers,” Zaou said.

“With passenger numbers continuing to grow, our food and beverage offering has been expanding, with a host of newcomers moving in across our domestic and int'l terminals.

“We now have a curated dining offering that reflects the quality and diversity of Sydney's rich food experiences, whether our passengers are looking for a great coffee, local seafood, authentic international flavours, simple family favourites or a fine dining experience, they can find it at Sydney Airport,” he concluded.

Mangan **pictured** top lounging around his new Sydney venue and **inset** some of the delicious snacks on offer. *AB*

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Travel Daily



Window Seat



CHRISTMAS is fast approaching and Santa is busy mapping out his special, top-secret flight plan with Airservices Australia (AA) this week to ensure all goes smoothly for 'Operation Present Drop' on Christmas Eve.

As Australia's official Santa flight management team, Airservices' air traffic controllers have allocated Santa's call sign - 'Red One' - carefully designing the great man's flight path across the country so that his sleigh doesn't have to make any non-traditional landings and traumatise kids with graphic Santa crash footage for generations to come.

To help expedite his journey, Airservices has also issued a special flight operations notice to all other pilots to ensure Santa has a clear path through Australian airspace to deliver presents in a timely manner across the nation.

Travel Daily can reveal that Santa's flight path will see him visit the Pacific Islands and New Zealand, before crossing into Australian airspace around Norfolk Island to zig-zag his way up and down the country.

Aussie kids are expected to hear a slight rumbling sound on their roofs and vigorous cookie chomping before Santa makes a dash from Australian airspace over the Cocos Islands.

"Our air traffic controllers will be guiding Santa safely through Australian airspace, using our surveillance technology to track him twice every second to ensure we keep Santa and his reindeer safe," AA said.

'24 to thrive, not survive

THE future of Australia's tourism sector looks bright despite mounting downward pressure applied by persistent inflation and broader geopolitical uncertainties, a new outlook report from Deloitte contends.

The firm's *Tourism Market Outlook* study indicated that while Australians are cutting back on discretionary spending in virtually every other category, the outlay on domestic travel will buck the trend with overnight bookings expected to reach the golden hill of pre-pandemic levels by the middle of next year.

Overnight bookings growth is then forecast to moderate slightly before growing at a rate of around 5% each year to 2026.

The report also suggested there is cause for optimism for the broader tourism sector, with international arrivals also set to exceed pre-pandemic levels soon.

Close to 10 million international arrivals are predicted to make their way to our shores in 2024,

Dnata inks MCY deal

DNATA Catering & Retail and the Sunshine Coast Airport have inked a new strategic partnership agreement that will aim to drive advancements in dining experiences in regional aviation.

"We will continue to invest and work in partnership with the airport to ensure a consistent world-class dining experience for passengers on board each flight," dnata Catering & Retail Australia CEO Hiranjan Aloysius said.

The latest deal follows newcomer Bonza awarding dnata a multi-year contract to support its operations and services, as well as the delivery of its 100% on-demand Australian menu earlier in the year (*TD 15 Mar*).

Over the last nine months, dnata has worked closely with Bonza's team to develop a broad range of Australian made products across main meals, beverages and snacks.



growing at an average rate of 6.8% per annum to reach 11 million by 2026.

"Australians are not willing to not travel and international holidaymakers are returning," Deloitte Access Economics' Adele Labine-Romain observed.

"Domestic travel continues to power the industry's recovery and is already almost equal to pre-pandemic levels, with Australians battling a cost-of-living crisis still willing to dig deep to see their own country, visit family and friends, or attend marquee events," she added.

Labine-Romain noted that while there had been a slight "softening" in domestic tourism in recent months, the number of domestic overnight trips in the Sep 2023 quarter still managed to reach 98% of pre-pandemic levels, while spending of \$28.4 billion represented an impressive 136% eclipse of 2019 volumes. *AB*

Keep those bookings

TOURISM Tropical North Queensland is urging travellers not to cancel their bookings in the wake of Cyclone Jasper ravaging the region over the course of the last week.

The tourism body's chief, Mark Olsen, stressed that it was vital the region did not lose existing bookings and that people still made forward bookings for Jan.

"Tropical North Queensland operators have already lost \$60 million in bookings (*TD 19 Dec*) and are likely to lose a further \$125 million over Dec and Jan, which represents 15-20% of total expenditure over those months," Olsen warned.

"We are very concerned about the lack of bookings that would normally be coming in now for Jan and the level of cancellations that we are seeing for Jan."

While parts of Far North Qld have been left devastated by the vicious storm, there are still plenty of tourism experiences remaining operational, such as the Skyrail Rainforest Cableway, many Great Barrier Reef cruises, and Kuranda day tours.

The Captain Cook Highway has also reopened between Palm Cove and Cairns.

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CORPORATE UPDATE

Bleisure boosts Brisbane

BRISBANE is on track to be the top destination for corporate travellers in 2024, with data from Flight Centre's Corporate Traveller division showing 20% more bookings for the Qld capital than last year's top spot, Melbourne.

The prediction was extracted from the SME travel specialist from its own bookings data which compared air, car, rail and hotel purchases made by its corporate customers to 35 of Australia's major holiday destinations.

While most capital cities are performing well for bookings over the coming holiday period, Brisbane is in pole position as more executives look to combine work with pleasure next year.

To date, Brisbane bookings have outpaced Melbourne and Sydney, marking a departure from last year which saw Melbourne beat out Sydney by 7% and Brisbane by 3% in bookings.

BCD China goes eco

BCD Travel China has partnered with the Global Sustainable Tourism Council and its training partner, Colorful Earth, to drive sustainable transformation in business travel.

The partners are set to unveil the 'Sustainable Business Travel Strategy Guide', which is expected to be available in the second half of next year, along with a suite of training programs targeted at corporate clients, travel managers, and sustainability professionals.

Outside of the capital cities, Rottneest Island and Broome have garnered the biggest share of corporate bookings over the holiday period in WA, while in NSW, Port Macquarie, Orange, Coffs Harbour and Dubbo have all performed well.

Other strong bleisure destinations around the country included the Whitsundays, Bundaberg, Cairns and Hamilton Island in Qld, while Mildura and Avalon attracted plenty of corporate interest in Victoria. *AB*

ANA's fashion week



ALL Nippon Airways (ANA) will introduce new amenity kits for its Business and First class passengers in partnership with renowned luxury leather goods company Ettinger.

Exemplifying the carrier's sustainable commitment, the Ettinger pouches have been crafted from natural cotton canvas and recycled materials in four different colours.

Business pax bags contain lip balm and body lotion by Aveda, as well as ANA's reusable bag within the pouches (**pictured**).

First Class pax will be offered premium Sensai's skin care products, the ANA reusable bag and a special Ettinger card case.

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Travel Daily

Waving the white flag



LUXURY cruise line Seabourn left a rather memorable impression on a group of Australian travel agents, who were recently on board *Seabourn Pursuit* when she made her first voyage to the White Continent.

Led by the cruise line's Key Account Manager, Anastasia Kotanidis, advisors and their guests were exposed to the full raw beauty of Antarctica as the ship sailed through the Antarctic Circle and positioned herself at 66° south of the Equator.

Further highlights of the intrepid voyage included passing through Mikkelsen Harbour, where weddell seals, gentoo and adelic penguins were sighted, as well as exploring Half Moon Island, replete with plenty of chinstrap penguin sightings.

Agents were even lucky enough to embark on Zodiac adventures amid icebergs in Cierva Cove, and traverse the lauded 'Penguin

Highway' on Cuverville Island, situated at the entrance of the Errera Channel. *AB*

Luxury travel advisors are **pictured** on the deck of the ship as they take in the scenery.

QR adds Euro ports

QATAR Airways has unveiled a network expansion for next year which will see the Middle Eastern carrier fly to Venice and Hamburg in the northern summer.

Qatar Airways will resume services to Venice city from 12 Jun, seven times per week, while the airline will also expand to Hamburg in Germany, where it will begin flying seven times per week from Jul.

Venice is expected to see high demand from Australia, Qatar predicts, as well as Japan and China, while Hamburg will serve as a gateway to South Africa, Thailand and the Philippines.

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APT and Travelmarvel have announced their end-of-year sales, which will be available from 26 Dec 2023 through to 09 Jan 2024. The sales apply to a range of tours across Europe, Australia, Vietnam & Cambodia, New Zealand, and Canada and Alaska. Travellers can also score free three-night bonus tours, including on the Magic of Prague tour, as well as selected trips in Vietnam. Learn more by calling APT on 1800 102 311 or Travelmarvel on 1300 672 534.

Valid for bookings made before 31 Jan 2024, **Cruise Traveller** is offering savings of up to 5% on its Lord of the Highlands sailings, which depart between Apr and Oct 2024. Enjoy a five- or seven-night voyage through Scotland's Hebrides Islands in the west, the Orkneys in the north, and the 100km-long Caledonian Canal. Voyages are priced from approximately AU\$5,156 - call Cruise Traveller on 1800 507 777 to book.

Savings of up to \$1,891 on single supplements are available at **CF Mekong River Cruises'** latest offering on its eight-night cruise between Ho Chi Minh City and Siem Reap or vice versa. Departing between Jan and Apr next year, sailors are invited to join the boutique 14-cabin luxury *Toum Tiou 2* riverboat, boasting impressive views of riverside hamlets, rice farms, and rarely seen ancient temples. Email office@cfmekong.com for more information.

'Fly **Rex** and save' is available now with the carrier's offering of low fare to domestic capitals. Travellers can pick up a ticket from Melbourne to Gold Coast from just \$109, Melbourne to Sydney from \$95, and Melbourne to Adelaide from \$89. Rex is also offering baggage and refreshments aboard these services. Call 13 17 13 for full details.

Save up to 25% off on stays at **OUTRIGGER Resorts and Hotels'** Fiji Beach Resort with the hotel operator's 'Bula Sales 2024'. Located on the Castaway Island in the tropical destination, the offer also includes a FJ\$200 spa credit at Bebe Spa or a two-day MeiMei nanny service, and up to 15% off purchased meal plans, and much more. Available for bookings until 31 Mar 2024, the offer is eligible for a minimum six-night of stay. Use the code 'BULA24' to apply for the deal [HERE](#).

Hilton Hotels & Resorts is offering its loyalty members the opportunity to earn 2,000 bonus points per stay at any Hilton property, with travellers also able to use their digital keys to earn an extra 500 points per stay. Valid for stays from 01 Jan to 01 May 2024, more info on the Points Plus Promotion is available [HERE](#).

Enjoy discounted travel packages from **Jetstar** in travel hot spots including Phuket, Bali, Fiji, and the Sunshine Coast. [CLICK HERE](#) to view all the offers boasting massive savings, as well as exclusive sales and deals available when you combine flights and hotels into the one bundle. Qantas' budget carrier also has up to 81 holidays up for grabs at discounted prices.

Qantas dashes for charity



THE Flying Kangaroo has partnered up with the Australian Red Cross to lend its support for those who have suffered through bushfires in Queensland as part of its annual Christmas initiative.

Families living in the town of Miles have received gifts donated by Qantas team, which were all delivered by the special QantasLink Christmas aircraft, Dasher-8 (**pictured**).

Impacted residents were also handed a plethora of hand-knitted trauma teddies by Red Cross volunteers in an effort to provide some added

Christmas cheer to families in the community of Tara.

The voluntary group's emergency service teams are also currently on duty on the ground across Australia this holiday season, aiding those who were impacted by severe natural disasters, including the recent devastating floods in Far North Queensland caused by Cyclone Jasper (**TD 15 Dec**). *MW*

QR gets personal

QATAR Airways has introduced a new in-house application aboard its jets that will enable the carrier's cabin crew to deliver more personalised experiences to its passengers.

During the initial rollout, the application offers real-time insights on flight information, as well as customer and service details, which will allow QR staff to view passengers' profiles, including Privilege Club members and oneworld members.

The new tech will also see cabin crew able to field special service requests and preferences from passengers for a more personalised journey.

Skippering lectures

CAPTAIN Cook Cruises has revealed the first batch of its special guest lecturers to kick off its visiting scientist program, which are included in guest itineraries on select departures.

Confirmed in the specialist program to date are Dr Alison Green, Dr Anne Hogget, Dr Lyle Vail and Dr Penny Berents - all of whom will deliver expert insights about marine biology and reef conservation aboard the line's *MS Caledonian Sky*.

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