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WA talks up cruise

THE world's biggest cruise ship industry operators have convened at Crown Towers in Perth today for the second and final day of the WA Cruise Exchange.

Hosted by the Western Australian Government, the event is showcasing the state's ports and shore excursions on offer for eight leading cruise lines.

Tourism WA is also launching its *Western Australian Cruise Tourism Strategic Plan 2023-2033* at the event - for more details, see today's issue of **CW**.

Alaska awaits you

NOW is the perfect time for adventure-seeking travellers to book an Alaska cruise with Norwegian Cruise Line (NCL), with sailings available through to 2025.

Guests will see the US state's most stunning sights, including Glacier Bay, Icy Strait Point, Skagway and Sitka.

For more info, see **page eight**.

FCTG TTV to hit \$22 billion

FLIGHT Centre Travel Group's (FCTG) profit upgrade (**TD** breaking news) will now see the company report a full year result of around \$300 million as it continues to see surging demand.

FCTG's global Total Transaction Value (TTV) for the last year is expected to be around \$22 billion, more than double the prior year, and only just behind the \$23.7 billion 2018/19 record.

Global leisure TTV will contribute \$10 billion to the total, while corporate turnover is also up more than 20% on the previous TTV record of \$8.9b.

"Overall, we are pleased with our continued recovery as demand has generally rebounded solidly across both our leisure and corporate travel businesses," said MD Graham Turner.

"In corporate, we have delivered record TTV while investing significantly for the future by securing large volumes of new

accounts, expanding our sales force and introducing innovative new platforms and products for our customers, which should lead to stronger returns in the years ahead," he said.

"In leisure we are emerging from the pandemic as a more productive, more efficient and more diverse business with a strong stable brand, enhanced capability and efficient and productive models that are now starting to achieve scale benefits," Turner added.

He outlined Flight Centre's expectations that, as in the past and evidenced by consistent year-on-year growth in outbound travel, "leisure travellers will continue to prioritise holidays and experiences over other areas of discretionary spending".

FLT shares jumped about 5% in the wake of the announcement. The company will release its full year results on Wed 30 Aug.

Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today features seven pages of the latest news including **Business Events News**, plus full pages from:

- Norwegian Cruise Line
- Italian National Tourist Board

The road to Italy

AGENTS are invited to brush up on their knowledge of Italy by participating in an online training course developed by The Italian National Tourist Board.

The Travel to Italy Academy will equip agents with the confidence to sell and upsell their clients incredible trips to 'Bel Paese'.

Head to the **back page** for more.

Doyle on board

TV PERSONALITY Melissa Doyle has been appointed as "Australian ambassador" for Avalon Waterways, alongside existing work with Audi Australia, World Vision and Make-A Wish.

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GC to host games?

GOLD Coast Central Chamber of Commerce is calling for the city to host the 2026 Commonwealth Games after its shock dumping by the Victorian Govt, citing existing infrastructure from the 2018 Games as a major advantage.

Premier Annastacia Palaszczuk has expressed little interest.

Wendy Wu Tours

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AI itinerary maker

TRIPADVISOR has launched a new AI-powered travel planning product, which creates personalised itineraries.

After entering their destination and travel dates, who they're travelling with, and the types of activities they're interested in, travellers are presented with a day-by-day itinerary created using OpenAI's generative AI tech, which draws on human insights from Tripadvisor reviews.

The custom itineraries can then be saved, edited and shared with travel companions.

The AI feature will initially only be accessible to users in the US during the beta trial phase, with the feature to be made available "soon" in more markets.

SYD now 90% of '19

JUST over three million passengers passed through Sydney Airport (SYD) in Jun, just shy of 90% compared to pre-pandemic levels, new Jun traffic data released today shows.

Sydney's T1 international terminal recorded 1.16m travellers, representing an 88.8% recovery rate on the same month in 2019, as well as almost half a million gain on the same month in 2022.

Chinese visitors have grown significantly, now ranking third in the top 10 for passengers, only below Australia and NZ, with the rest of the pack comprised of the USA, India, South Korea, the UK, Indonesia and Singapore.

SIA on board with NTIA



SINGAPORE Airlines' expanded multi-year sponsorship deal for the National Travel Industry Awards (NTIAs) (*TD* breaking news yesterday) is a way of honouring the entire sector, according to the carrier's GM Agency Sales, Greg McJarrow.

Speaking at the formal announcement of the extended deal yesterday, McJarrow said "we are pleased to play a part in the continuation of this very important event to recognise the industry and its people".

"We look forward to celebrating with the industry the successes of the past year, and look to the future with continued optimism and positivity," he added.

AFTA CEO Dean Long, who confirmed that the event's logo (**pictured** on the media wall) no longer carries the AFTA logo as an indication of inclusivity reflecting

the NTIA's status as a celebration of excellence across all parts of the travel industry, said the Federation was thrilled to be hosting the awards again this year and welcoming SQ as major sponsor for the second time.

"The awards are an excellent opportunity to come together to celebrate and acknowledge the innovation, determination and resilience of our people," he said.

The 2023 NTIAs will take place at Melbourne's Crown Palladium Ballroom on 18 Nov, with the highly anticipated industry night of nights honouring winners across categories including suppliers, tour operators, wholesalers, travel agencies and individual top performers.

Long told *TD* that the awards had attracted a staggering 1,700 nominations, with finalists to be revealed in the coming weeks.

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MEL in the fast lane

A **NEW** road has been opened by Melbourne Airport this week to streamline access to the facility for faster departures.

The new elevated road, Naarm Way, will connect drivers from the Tullamarine Freeway to the Terminal 4 Ground Transport Hub, and is expected to take 5,000 cars off Terminal Drive each day.

Belgrade bag issues

BELGRADE Airport is currently experiencing disruption with its baggage handling services, Smartraveller has reported.

Bags may be significantly delayed for both transits and arrivals at Belgrade, with DFAT advising Australians to pack essential items in their hand luggage for the interim.

TTC making travel matter

THE Travel Corporation (TTC) last night released its second annual global Impact Report, alongside the findings of research showing sustainability is more important than ever to Aussie travellers.

The company commissioned a poll of just over 1,000 Australians in Jun 2022, concluding that a third of consumers planning to travel in the next year will seek out the most sustainable option.

Almost one in five said that if sustainable travel isn't possible they will travel less, or not at all, with cost seen as a barrier - an unnecessary consideration according to Toni Ambler, MD of TTC Tour Brands, who said "doing the right thing doesn't have to cost more; we have worked hard to integrate sustainable practices and experiences at no additional cost to our guests".

The research also noted a desire among Australians to book with tour operators that focus on sustainability, including trips that visit hotels, operators and restaurants that minimise food waste, while support for



local communities is also a key consideration.

Wildlife experiences are also of interest, with almost two-thirds of those polled saying they wanted to interact with local wildlife and nature when it comes to booking a sustainable holiday.

The report (**pictured**) tracks progress against TTC's five-year "How We Tread Right" sustainability strategy (**TD 24** Sep 2020) which measures its operations against criteria informed by the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. TTC Australia CEO David Hosking, who is also a Director of the group's TreadRight Foundation, said "reducing the environmental impact of our business, as articulated in our HWTR strategy, is at the core of all we do" - see the report **HERE**.

TM's record result

IT HAS been a record-breaking half-year sales result for travel agency network TravelManagers' (TM) in 2023.

The strong result managed to eclipse TM's previous six-month result by a comfortable 29%, with the numbers even more impressive when compared with the same period last year, which was surpassed by 104%.

Growth in the average sales value per customer has been a key contributor to the outcome, the company observed, increasing by more than 50% compared with the same period pre-pandemic, and almost 60% compared with Jan-Jun 2022.

"It is a great result for the company, given the company has 30% fewer PTMs than pre-pandemic," TM enthused.

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US embracing AI

A **THIRD** of American travellers have flagged their intention to use ChatGPT for trip planning in the next six months.

The finding was published in a new study conducted by Longwoods International this week, which also showed that 14% of American travellers have already used the AI platform to plan itineraries and book trips.

"The travel industry has always been an early adopter when it comes to technology and innovation," Longwoods CEO Amir Eylon observed, adding the trend was also true of the early adoption of computers for reservation systems.

Sicilian fire delay

DUE to a fire at Catania Fontanarossa Airport in Sicily this week, all flights to and from the hub have been cancelled.

The situation is constantly evolving and could be extended.

Ovolo's TriO of opportunity

THE Australian and New Zealand markets have been singled out as fertile ground for expansion by Ovolo Group, which this week established TriO Capital, a new dedicated investment arm of the business to pursue more opportunities.

Hailed as a "strategic milestone" for the hotel group, the new division was formed to seize on investment targets across Australia and the broader APAC region through joint-ventures, as well as pave the way to asset manage non-Ovolo branded products to drive greater returns.

TriO will also work with funds, developers and real estate owners who are looking to rebrand or refurbish their properties to add greater value to hotel assets across the country.

"Our experience as owners and operators means we can effectively enhance cash flows, increase the value of our

investments, and deliver long-term returns for our partners, be it Ovolo-branded or otherwise," TriO Capital MD Tim Alpe said.

The decisions have already started for TriO in Australia, with the recent listing of Sydney's 1888 by Ovolo (**TD** 17 Jul) revealed to be part of the refreshed strategic plan to recycle capital to further grow throughout Australia, New Zealand, and selected Asia Pacific target markets.

Ovolo has tripled its room count in the past five years, fuelled by a new-build in Melbourne and refurbishments in Bali.

HBA retail deals

HOBART Airport has signed more long-term retail agreements as part of its expanded terminal project, with SSP and Lagardere AWPL groups signing on for seven-year agreements to operate in the Tasmania hub.



Window Seat

NOTHING beats a beautiful sunset, and lucky for us Aussies, the world's best sunset-viewing location is in our own backyard, apparently.

A new study from Bounce has ranked Uluru as the number one sunset destination in the world, with a "sunset score" of 9.13 out of 10.

The iconic Aussie landmark earned the top spot thanks to its very low levels of light pollution, as well as the nearly 30,000 "sunset" and "sunrise" Instagram posts it already features in.

Uluru also boasts the highest number of article/blog recommendations.

Other destinations on the top 10 list include the Maldives, Hawaii's Haleakala, Santorini in Greece, and the Grand Canyon.

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HURRY,
ENDS 30 JULY
2023



Evans in Mosman seventh heaven



THIS morning Travel Associates (TA) held a ceremony to celebrate the formal rebranding of its office in Mosman, NSW as Evans & Turner Travel Associates - putting the names of business leader Stewart Evans, his wife and colleague Melanie on the door.

The momentous occasion saw senior Flight Centre Travel Group leaders in attendance, with Travel Associates GM Australia and NZ, Rachel Kingswell, saying Evans had built the outlet into the number one TA performer in NSW over the last three years.

The seven-day operation has eight consultants on deck, who have collectively sent more than 1,300 clients on trips in 2022/23 - and that's just the start for the rapidly growing business, which is making the most of the strong luxury demand in the market.

"I'm just really proud of what you have achieved...you live



and breathe the DNA of what Travel Associates is, and that is entrepreneurship, ownership, and that real discernment in regards for the way you look after your clients," Kingswell said.

Stewart Evans (centre) and Melanie Evans (right) are pictured with Anna Burgdorf, FCTG Global Brand & Marketing Leader - Luxury Leisure; Danielle Galloway, Global MD Luxury and Independent Brands; and Kingswell.

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Ponant St Lawrence

PONANT'S *Le Commandant Charcot* will become the first cruise ship to voyage through the ice of the St Lawrence River during the boreal winter, on a 12-night journey to Quebec and the Innu and Micmac communities of Canada.

The new itinerary offers travellers four departures to choose from between Jan 2024 and Feb 2025, with prices starting from \$31,910pp - [CLICK HERE](#).

MSC adds to Turkiye

MSC Cruises has announced a new 11-night sailing featuring two ports of call in Turkiye, including the resort town of Kusadasi and an extended stay in Istanbul, aboard *MSC Poesia*.

Departing in Sep, the itinerary will also visit Piraeus in Greece, which offers an easy gateway to Athens, while in Italy, guests will enjoy sightseeing in Palermo, the capital of the island of Sicily, and the coastal town of Civitavecchia.

A&K icy cool savings

SAVE on trips to Antarctica with Abercrombie & Kent (A&K), with the tour operator offering up to \$7,750 off for any guest booked on a luxury expedition cruise to the White Continent departing between Dec and Jan 2024.

The luxury operator is also allowing children to sail for free on the Antarctica family voyages at the end of this year, while solos can also save up to \$15,843 off the single supplement.

Call 1300 551 541 for more information on the deals.

Hyatt inks Sabre res

HYATT Hotels Corporation has selected Sabre to enhance its central reservations system capabilities, which will help make the search and booking process faster for guests.

The company will deploy Sabre technology worldwide to support advanced connectivity and distribution in an effort to drive revenue to hotel owners.

The Chat with Jenny
A Conversation with Kathy Pavlidis
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Event spend up

THREE quarters of Australian event professionals expect their total number of events in 2023 to increase, along with event spend, new research from Cvent shows.

Despite budget constraints, organisations are prepared to spend more on events this year, particularly on technology and marketing.

The industry report also reveals that event planners feel positively about virtual and hybrid events as well as webinars, even though in-person events are on the rise, with 58% of respondents planning to host mostly face-to-face events this year.

Sustainability is still a key priority, with 83% of respondents saying they have a sustainability target for their events, and 75% willing to track carbon footprint.

SILVER LINING FOR EVENTS SECTOR

THE Victorian Government's shock decision to cancel the Commonwealth Games will cause a "fallout" for the state's reputation as a major international events destination, the Victoria Tourism Industry Council (VTIC) has argued.

"The biggest risk right now for Victoria will be in managing the reputational fallout as a destination for hosting major international events," VTIC CEO Felicia Mariani said.

"Pulling the pin at such a crucial time on a major event like this will create concern that needs to be managed carefully."

The blow for Victoria comes as other states celebrate major wins in the sporting events arena, including WA, which has secured the right to host the Australian leg of global rugby event HSBC SVNS, for 2024 and 2025.

Taking place in Perth on 26-28

Jan 2024 and again in 2025, the event attracts the world's top rugby nations to play an alternative rugby union format, and has a strong following in WA's key international inbound tourism markets, including the UK, US, Singapore and China.

WA Tourism Minister Rita Saffioti said the event "will further amplify Western Australia's status as one of the sporting capitals of South-East Asia and a fantastic host of international rugby events".

South Australia has also announced a victory for its events industry, with the state to host its first professional mixed golf tournament in Oct.

The first event in the 2023/24 Webex Players Series, TPS South Australia will take place at the Willunga Golf Club in the McLaren Vale wine region.

"We have seen a growing



appetite for golf in SA, and now some of Australia's best men and women golfers, all abilities golfers and juniors will be competing in one of the world's best food and wine regions," local MP Leon Bignell enthused.

MEANWHILE, Australia & NZ are set to shine on the global stage as the FIFA Women's World Cup kicks off in Sydney this week and makes its way around the country over the next month (**TD** 17 Jul).

According to Accommodation Australia, hotel capacity right across Sydney is nearing 70%, reflecting a big surge in demand.

GC biz events famil

DESTINATION Gold Coast is gearing up to host This is Gold Coast 2023, a business events famil set to showcase the city's best venues and experiences.

Around 70 event professionals from Australia and New Zealand will participate in the three-day program beginning 14 Aug, which will include appointments, networking and exploration of the Gold Coast's best business events offerings.

Last year's famil generated \$47 million in leads for the city.

NSW event grant

THE NSW Government has granted more than \$630,000 to 81 community organisations, such as Dubbo's ORISCON, as part of the Multicultural NSW Stronger Together Festival and Event Grant program.

Ranging from \$5,000 to \$15,000, the grants will go towards hosting grassroots festivals and events over the next eight months.

BEA lands Earth

BUSINESS Events Adelaide (BEA) has secured the Advancing Earth Observation Forum (AEO24), a five-day event set to take place at Adelaide Convention Centre in Sep 2024.

Home to 100 space-related companies, SA is ideally positioned to host AEO24.

The inaugural event, held last year in Brisbane, attracted around 300 delegates.

Hilton illuminates

HILTON Melbourne Little Queen Street will be the first hotel to host Candlelight Concerts, a series of live performances by local musicians, illuminated by thousands of candles.

Set in Luci restaurant, guests will enjoy hits from Ed Sheeran and Imagine Dragons performed by a local string ensemble this Fri night, with tix including a welcome drink.

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Hyatt Centric Melbourne has appointed **Mark Foxwell** as its new General Manager. Foxwell brings a wealth of experience to the new role as an accomplished professional with an extensive history with the hotel brand. He was previously the principal consultative advisor for people, culture and organisational leadership at Hyatt's Hong Kong office. He also boasts 27 years of human resource leadership in total.

Bringing over 18 years of experience, **Sarah Bacic** has taken on the role of Director of Sales and Marketing at **Novotel Sydney Darling Square**. The marketing specialist has held similar roles in various companies, including a long stint with Accor as its Associate Director of Sales at Mercure Sydney and ibis Sydney World Square.

Lucy Ellis has been appointed the Chief Communications Officer for **MSC Cruises**. Ellis will steer the company's global communications strategy, oversee the internal & external communications and manage the cruise line's reputation. She has more than two decades of strategic communications experience and was previously the Senior Vice President at Weber Shandwick & Associate Director at H&K Strategies.

Adding to her tenure in the travel industry, **Kellie Browning** has taken on the position of Business Development Manager Vic/SA at the destination management company, **Total Holiday Options**. Browning is an industry veteran with over 35 years of experience with a strong background in business development, including a recent stint at TravelManagers Australia.

Ben Trodd has begun his position as the Chief Operating Officer at **AMAN**. Trodd is regarded as a seasoned professional in the hospitality industry and brings over 25 years of experience to the position. He will work closely with CEO and Chairman Vlad Doronin to contribute to delivering the brand's broader vision, as well as ensuring the services are aligned with AMAN's luxury standard.

After spending two years exploring other career opportunities, **Hans Lagerweij** has marked his return to **Albatros Expeditions** as its CEO. Lagerweij aims to grow sales by adding more quality to its expedition product, as well as enhance its sustainability reputation in remote locations. He is based in the tour operator's Miami office, and was most recently the SVP for yachts at Four Seasons Hotels & Resorts.

QT Hotels & Resorts has announced the appointment of **Joel Gordon** as General Manager of QT Canberra. With over 20 years of experience, Gordon's passionate and result-driven approach has played a vital role in his success in the hospitality sector. Prior to joining, Gordon was the Regional General Manager of Crystalbrook Collection in Queensland.

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Rydges Melbourne reborn



RYDGES Melbourne officially reopened yesterday, revealing the results of a massive transformation.

Located in the city's theatre district and close to the iconic Collins Street, the 370-key property now features an abundance of natural light, timber and soft tones of eucalyptus green and rusty ochre.

Guests will also enjoy the completely redesigned rooms, each equipped with Rydges DreamBeds, and state-of-the-art technology throughout the property, including self-serve

kiosks and online check-in, as well as in-room TVs offering casting, room service and more.

There are also 11 refreshed meeting areas including a new ballroom with seven-metre-high ceilings, an updated Rooftop Terrace with sweeping views of the city, and a modern fitness studio offering the latest tech.

"Rydges Melbourne has been meticulously transformed to be a flagship for the brand," Rydges Group GM Hotel Operations Troy Cuthbertson said.

"We have created a property that features more on every level...guests feedback has already been extremely positive and the interest in our new event spaces is strong," he enthused.

BA navigator tool

BRITISH Airways is trialling a new digital tool to help customers navigate their way through London Heathrow Airport.

Customers who are connecting between flights can enter their flight details to get step-by-step instructions, along with an interactive map, on how to navigate from their arrival gate to their onward departure gate.

The tool can be accessed via QR codes on digital screens in the airport or by visiting wayfinding.maps.ba.com.

Mandarin in Miami

MANDARIN Oriental Hotel Group has announced a new hotel and branded residence in Brickell Key, Florida.

The new Mandarin Oriental, Miami and The Residences at Mandarin Oriental, Miami are set to open in 2030.

The project is being developed by Swire Properties, Mandarin Oriental's joint-venture partner.

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