

FCTG appointment

FLIGHT Centre Independent has announced the appointment of TTC veteran Nichole Steadman as a Brisbane-based Business Development Partner.

Steadman is well known to the industry having been Qld State Manager for AAT Kings for over 17 years, and more recently working in corporate travel with the Government's Future Fund Management Agency.

FCTG Independent Sales Director, Fiona Batten, said she was thrilled to welcome Steadman to the team, saying "with her outstanding skills, experience and enthusiasm I know she will make a remarkable impact on our sales efforts and the overall success of our company".

FCTG Independent is also currently recruiting for another Melbourne-based Business Development Partner.

More appointments on [page 7](#).

Uganda alert

THE Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade has advised LGBTQI+ travellers to "carefully consider the risks of travelling to Uganda" in light of a new Anti-Homosexuality Bill which has been passed by the country's Parliament.

"The law prohibits same sex relationships and convictions under these laws may result in severe sentences," according to a newly issued Smartraveller advisory released overnight.

Air NZ flags US fare fight

INCREASING capacity on the Pacific route over the coming months is likely to be good news for travellers currently facing high airfares, with Air New Zealand Chief Sales and Customer Officer Leanne Geraghty understatedly suggesting the industry is likely to see some "interesting price points coming through".

Speaking today at the TTF Australia Outlook 2023 conference in Sydney, Geraghty said the next six months will be key, particularly on the Auckland-Los Angeles route, which has been a "cornerstone" of the Air NZ network for many years.

"I've been in aviation for many years and Air New Zealand has never seen so much competition on Auckland-LA as what will exist come the end of this calendar year," Geraghty said.

Rivals including United Airlines, American Airlines and Qantas are all boosting their capacity out of Auckland, in particular to LA, but QF is also going head-to-head with Air NZ's fledgling non-stop route to New York (**TD** yesterday).

Geraghty noted the Sep launch of AKL-JFK has gone "incredibly well", while NZ also operates non-stop from Auckland to Chicago, Houston and San Francisco - addressing the ongoing trend towards people "wanting to go directly to their destination".

MEANWHILE, Geraghty also noted that an increased reliance on trade partnerships was an ongoing feature of industry

relationships for Air NZ.

She said despite the easing of restrictions, there is still a higher demand for customer support post-pandemic - exacerbated by the fact that there is constrained demand and elevated customer expectations around the products and services that they are receiving.

"We want to turn to our travel agent partnerships quite strongly in this space, because we think they offer a fabulous servicing expertise and capability for customers and travellers to help," Geraghty added.

More from the TTF conference on pages **five** and **seven**.

Batik group bonus

BATIK Air is offering a \$50 Visa prepaid gift card for all Australian and NZ travel agents who deposit a group request this month.

The carrier's local GSA, Airline Rep Services, has established a dedicated group desk which can be accessed via batikairgroups@airlinerepservices.com.

QF ups Santiago

QANTAS is set to increase service to Chile during this year's peak Antarctic cruise season.

GDS screens indicate SYD-SCL frequencies will move to daily flights from the current four weekly services between 10 Dec 2023 and 31 Jan 2024, using Boeing 787-9 aircraft.

Today's issue of TD

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

- Norwegian Cruise Line
- Collette

QF points sale

QANTAS has launched a month-long "points plus pay" sale under which members of its frequent flyer program will be able to use 30% fewer Qantas Points when booking any seat on domestic or international flights.

The offer applies to all cabins on all QF, JQ and partner airline flights that can be booked using Points Plus Pay on the QF website.

Qantas said the initiative is its biggest ever member-wide offer on Points Plus Pay flights, with offers available until 30 Jun.

Classic Flight Rewards seats are not eligible for the 30% discount.

Disney webinar

BEDSONLINE and Disney are jointly hosting a webinar on Disneyland Resort, with travel advisors invited to join the free session to learn more about the latest innovations, attractions, dining and accommodation at the popular California property.

The webinar will also cover ticket types and park reservations including recent changes to arrangements, and there will be an opportunity for a Q&A.

Taking place next Tue 06 Jun at 3pm AEST, participants can RSVP to attend by **CLICKING HERE**.



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GC lures event planners

DESTINATION Gold Coast has launched a new global business events campaign encouraging incentive groups to “give their team the trip they deserve”.

The campaign is aimed at the incentive and corporate event planners in South East Asia, and is designed to speak to the high achievers within their company.

“This digital-led campaign is an acknowledgement by us of all the effort and contributions they have made on behalf of their company,” Destination Gold Coast Head of Business Events Selina Sinclair said.

“But more than that, it’s a reward,” she added, “a way to say thank you for all the amazing work they have put in and give them something amazing & truly memorable in return, a Gold Coast trip”.

The campaign has begun rolling out across trade and social media, and will be supported by content



and publicity activities.

Incentive travel made up 12.9% of all business events on the Gold Coast and was the fourth most popular international business event destination in 2019-2020.

The sector is already ramping up again, with Amway Thailand selecting the city to host 1,500 delegates over five days in Mar 2025, which is expected to generate around \$5m.

Additionally, Destination Gold Coast has 99 confirmed conferences and meetings worth \$202m in the pipeline between now and 2030 - for more business events news, see [page six](#).

New Dusit GSA

THAILAND-BASED hospitality giant Dusit Hotels and Resorts has appointed Discover the World as its general sales agent (GSA) in Australia.

The move is effective from today, seeing Discover the World assume all responsibilities for sales and marketing representation for Dusit locally.

The fast-growing brand is set to open another 11 new hotels worldwide this year including its first properties in Japan and Nepal as well as returning to a presence in India.

“The company is also seeking opportunities to expand its footprint in Australia through hotel management agreements,” Dusit said today.

The newly appointed Dusit team in Australia is planning a host of activity over the coming months, with the main contact being Belinda Harvy, on hand to provide support for group/MICE bookings via belinda.harvy@dusit.com.



Window Seat

EVERYONE loves a road trip, but there can be some dangers associated with self-drive holidays.

A tourist in Hawaii has taken an unexpected dip after her GPS directions led to driving her rental car into the water down a boat ramp at Kailua-Kona on the Big Island.

Police said the visitor, who luckily swam to safety, said she thought the water was “just a big puddle” and was quite surprised when the car stopped and started to fill.

The 2020 Ford Edge ended up in “deep water” by the time she was able to get out.

Amazingly, it was the second such incident in just a few weeks at the same location - probably time to update those online maps!

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AI court failure

AN AVIATION lawyer has been left red-faced and may face sanctions after enlisting the ChatGPT artificial intelligence platform to assist in a case against South American airline Avianca.

Court documents he lodged cited three previous cases as precedents, but Avianca's lawyers investigated and found they did not exist, having been simply made up by the AI software.

The lawyer has submitted an affidavit admitting to consulting ChatGPT to supplement his research, confirming it was a "source that has revealed itself to be unreliable".

New GA NZ GSA

GARUDA Indonesia (GA) has appointed Aviation Online as its General Sales Agent in New Zealand, with responsibility for all marketing, sales and customer support activities.

GA's Sydney-based GM, Purwa Gurnita, said the partnership was a "significant milestone in our growth strategy" and will leverage Aviation Online's network of NZ travel partners.

Aviation Online noted that Bali was a favourite holiday destination for Kiwis, while there were also increasing corporate and MICE opportunities for growth to Indonesian destinations.

AFTA back to break-even

EXCLUSIVE

AFTER two years of losses through the COVID-19 pandemic period, the Australian Federation of Travel Agents (AFTA) has reported a small profit for the 12 months to 31 Mar, with the figures detailed in its Annual Report released yesterday (**TD** 31 May).

A summary of the Federation's financial position revealed a \$62,896 surplus for the year, a turnaround from last year's \$178,000 loss and the whopping \$2.1 million deficit in 2020/21 when the pandemic's onset saw almost all of AFTA's income dry up.

The 2022/23 result also reflected the significant uptick in activity within the organisation over the last 12 months, with total income for the year almost doubling to \$2.54 million and expenses also increasing commensurately to \$2.47 million.

This was the first year of the newly implemented membership fee structure based on turnover, rather than a combination of TTV and retail locations, which AFTA said "ensured membership fees

were proportionate to the real size of a business".

Interestingly, AFTA's members who had a TTV above \$1 billion in 2019 voluntarily maintained their membership fee payments based on those levels, while all other members were invoiced based on their FY21 TTV.

The report also notes that for most members, fees were reset and paid on a nine month prorated basis - following three years of no fees or significantly discounted rates in FY22.

"AFTA has now returned to a break-even position, focused on delivering real value to members while investing in rebuilding our financial position.

"This resulted in AFTA maintaining a sizeable retained earnings position which continues to be under management, generating income for the Association beyond membership fees and corporate partnerships in future years," the report said.

PIA plane seized

A PAKISTAN International Airlines aircraft has been arrested at Kuala Lumpur Airport in Malaysia, over an alleged failure to maintain lease payments on the Boeing 777 jet's engines.

A Malaysian court hearing approved the seizure, with local media claiming the outstanding amount is about US\$4 million, although the subcontinental carrier disputes this.

Norse MIA flights

STARTUP transatlantic carrier Norse Atlantic is now offering services from Miami to Oslo and London Gatwick.

Growing from its debut flight from Oslo to New York 12 months ago, the airline now operates a fleet of 15 two-class Boeing 787 aircraft.

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UK WHM eligibility widens

AUSTRALIANS aged up to 35 will be able to apply for working holidays in the United Kingdom, and stay for a maximum of three years, under a newly finalised free trade agreement between Australia and the UK which will help significantly boost the Working Holiday Maker (WHM) market in both nations.

Don Farrell, Federal Minister for Trade & Tourism, released details of the pact which expands the eligibility from the previous age limit of 30, effective 31 Jan 2024.

The changes to the bilateral deal also apply for UK young people, with British citizens up to 35 years of age able to apply for an Australian Working Holiday (subclass 417) visa, and be granted up to three Working Holiday visas without a requirement to undertake any 'specified work' under the pact. Other visa changes will allow guaranteed access to the UK

for Australian managers and specialists across all sectors to undertake three-year intra-corporate transfers to the UK, and for graduate trainees to have one year transfers.

Farrell noted that the new free trade agreement "strengthens our people-to-people links with the UK," giving Australian professionals the same access to the UK job market as nationals from across the EU.

Other measures in the newly finalised agreement include the removal of a range of tariffs, with over 99% of Australian products to enter the UK duty free.

E-bikes for A-ROSA

A-ROSA has added e-bikes to *A-ROSA Sena*, meaning complimentary e-bike hire is now available across the entire fleet.

A helmet and bike lock are provided with each hire.

Accor's new Mantra

ACCOR has increased its footprint in rural Western Australia with the addition of Mantra Bunbury Lighthouse.

The new hotel in WA's South West overlooks the Indian Ocean and the iconic Bunbury Lighthouse, "illuminating" the state's coastal charm.

Mantra Bunbury features 71 guestrooms and suites, Bunbury's largest conference space for up to 425 guests, an on site restaurant and bar, and an assortment of leisure facilities, such as an indoor swimming pool, sauna, and spa.

Mantra Bunbury is owned by Mandala Hospitality Group, as part of a long-standing partnership between the two.



Viking campaign

VIKING has launched its new The Heart of Exploring campaign, in which each couple will receive up to \$2,000 flight credit on 2024 and 2025 ocean voyages.

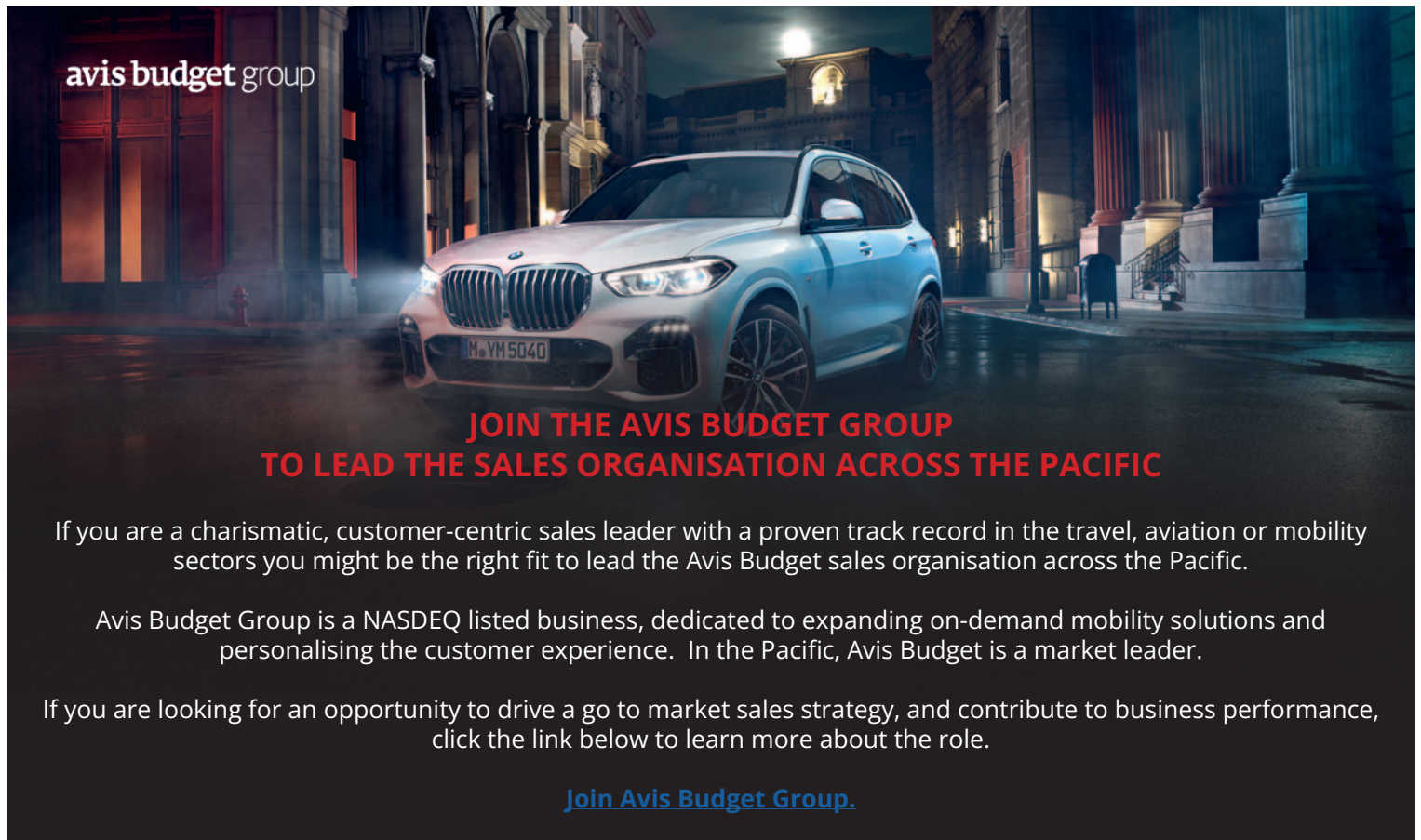
The offer is available for new bookings before 28 Aug.

"Our campaign concept comes from the premise that Vikings were the original explorers, with curiosity in their blood, and we at Viking have mastered the art of exploring - taking our curious guests into the heart of a destination," the cruise line said.

Uber agreement

THE Government of New South Wales has reached an Australian-first agreement with Uber to improve the experience of pax.

The company will be a part of the official Transport Management Centre incident response process, which will limit surge pricing for pax affected by public transport disruptions.



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Bonza scouts in the Sunshine



BONZA representatives joined more than 500 tourism industry professionals on 23 May at Scout23, the Sunshine Coast's biggest tourism exchange event.

Now in its fifth year, the Visit Sunshine Coast event was themed to celebrate the opening of Bonza's head office on the Sunshine Coast, with attendees "checking in on arrival" and flights being given away on the day.

"It was great to connect with the local tourism industry and share the exciting things we've been up to!" the Aussie carrier enthused on LinkedIn.

Representatives from more than 80 businesses gathered at Venue 114 in Bokarina to showcase and promote attractions, tours, events, restaurants and experiences, while connecting with ambassadors from 20 Visitor

Information Centres, including Brisbane Airport.

The tourism exchange also included an Indigenous Hub and an Accessibility Hub to coincide with the 2023 Year of Accessible Tourism.

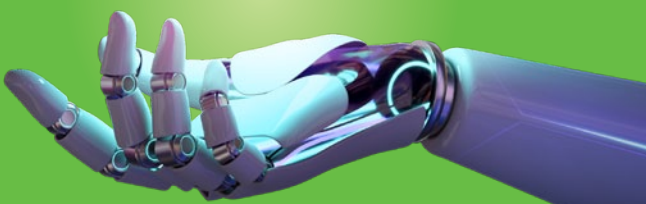
Pictured: Bonza legends Dennis, Mel, Elwyn, Heather, and Bindi giving a big thumbs up to Visit Sunshine Coast for running a great event.

KiwiRail packages

KIWIRAIL has introduced five new short break packages based around Great Journeys NZ's TranzAlpine scenic train.

The packages include trips to Fox and Franz Joseph Glaciers, tree-top walks and boating, plus a range of dining & accommodation experiences - see [HERE](#) for more.

AI in travel:
threat or superpower?



travelBulletin



Tourism collaboration key

AUSTRALIA'S destination marketing organisations have been urged to collaborate, as the country faces increasing competition from a plethora of other international destinations.

A panel at today's TTF Outlook 2023 conference in Sydney (see [p1](#)) featured Tourism Australia MD Phillipa Harrison, Tourism WA chief Carolyn Turnbull and Tourism & Events Qld CEO Patricia O'Callaghan, who said that while there were always tensions between different states, going forward "we need to look at how we can work together to actually put Australia first".

"We need a strategy to regain market share across a world where destinations are investing multiple billions of dollars in marketing, aviation & investment.

"If we can come together at a national level, I think that the country will be better off."

Harrison noted increasingly stiff competition globally, saying "all you need to do is go to ITB and see the nine or so pavilions of destination marketers to see just

how competitive our world is".

Harrison cited the multiple challenges faced in attracting visitors to Australia, such as high airfares and long travel times, but noted recent internal research finding that despite all that, there is still a huge underlying demand for visits Down Under.

"Our job at the moment is to make sure that we are incredibly distinctive in our marketing... everyone has a great beach, everyone has great wildlife, what is it that's going to make people get on a second flight to come to Australia? That's what we've got to focus on," the TA MD said.

"I think that if we can work with our policy leaders to overcome some of the challenges, then I think we're in a great spot."

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MCEC: ACCESSIBILITY IS "ESSENTIAL"

EXCLUSIVE

WITH accessible travel a hotly discussed topic in the industry lately, the business events sector is also ramping up efforts to make venues and events as inclusive as possible to people of all abilities and backgrounds.

The Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre (MCEC) is one of the major convention centres paving the way for accessible events in Australia.

"It is essential for the industry to ensure that venues provide spaces where everyone can belong, contribute, thrive and have equitable access to resources and opportunities," a spokesperson for MCEC told *Travel Daily*.

"MCEC has a strong history of hosting visitors from near and far and it's our responsibility to make

sure everyone feels included, safe and has an equal opportunity to be their best at every turn."

MCEC already has a number of measures in place to provide an inclusive environment, including accessible toilets, ramps and lifts; dedicated parking and lift access from the carparks; free wheelchair hire; braille signage on all rooms; fixed directional signage; and multiple door entries.

The centre also welcomes guide dogs and registered assistance dogs, provides TTA Hearing Assisted telephones in most meeting rooms, and has hearing assisted devices available to hire.

Cairns Convention Centre (CCC) also has accessibility front-of-mind, having just updated its website to include accessibility information about its venues, which can be found [HERE](#).

A spokesperson for CCC told *TD* that it plans on adding a full accessibility guide to its website within the next few weeks, following in the footsteps of the International Convention Centre (ICC) Sydney, which recently released its Accessible & Inclusive Events Guide (*TD* 25 May).

The CCC also encourages visitors to read up on information about accessible travel in the Tropical North Queensland region [HERE](#).

The Gold Coast Convention and Exhibition Centre also features a comprehensive accessibility guide on its website, affirming its commitment to "providing access that is open, safe and inclusive for all our visitors".

The guide details the centre's accessible facilities and services, as well as its wheelchair and mobility equipment - see it [HERE](#).

Syd now top dog

SYDNEY has ranked as the number one most popular domestic destination for meetings, events, and conferences in 2023, according to new data from FCM Meetings & Events.

The harbour city bumped Melbourne down to second position, while Adelaide and Perth overtook Brisbane as the third and fourth most popular Aussie cities for meetings, events, and conferences this year.

New Zealand took the top spot as the favourite international destination for meetings, events and conferences, with the United Kingdom, Fiji, Singapore and Indonesia rounding out the top five.

FCM green guide

FCM Meetings & Events has released a Sustainable Events Handbook providing planners with steps they can take to ensure that their event is sustainable.

The guide helps planners assess the 'greenness' of a venue, how to help attendees understand sustainable event measures, and tips on making eco-friendly choices throughout the planning process - [CLICK HERE](#) to download a free copy.

Event training

EVENT planners can join rEVENTS Academy's seven-week, online event management training program to improve their event management skills.

Taking place from 24 Jul to 10 Sep, the program is delivered in an interactive format and includes more than 10 modules.

The \$890 registration price includes GST and covers all members in an event committee - register [HERE](#).

Sofitel SPA offer

THE newly opened Sofitel SPA at Sofitel Sydney Darling Harbour is offering a \$500 voucher with event bookings valued from \$50,000 held from now until Nov, for bookings made by 31 Aug.

The spa is also offering Corporate Wellness Packages, which include treatment options and access to the Sofitel SPA Relaxation Lounge overlooking Darling Harbour as well as herbal teas and refreshments - [CLICK HERE](#).

ICMSA historic first

ICMSA is readying for a historic month, with three meetings starting on the same day.

Come 26 Jun, ICMSA staff will be manning registration desks in Brisbane and Melbourne in preparation for an influx of close to 5,000 delegates attending three separate meetings - the International Conference on Conversation Analysis at the University of Queensland, the 26th World Mining Congress at the Brisbane Convention & Exhibition Centre, and the University of Melbourne MD Student Conference.

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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.

Travel Associates has announced **Ashleigh Teixeira** as the new Head of Operations for New Zealand. Teixeira brings extensive knowledge and experience to the new role, having spent the majority of her career at FCTG, which she joined in 2000, as Area Manager and Integration Lead. She will report to Rachel Kingswell, GM ANZ.

Former state manager WA/NT of Helloworld Travel, **Gary Hilt**, has become the Head of Charter Sales WA at **National Jet Express**. Hilt's familiarity within the travel industry is reflected through his previous roles including regional manager at Emirates and a stint at South African Airways as a national sales manager.

The **Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT)** has announced **Thapanee Kiatphaibool** as its new Governor, effective from 01 Sep, after a unanimous decision by the board. Kiatphaibool will continue her journey with TAT after joining the organisation in 1999, where she has held multiple senior positions, including a run as the deputy governor for tourism products and business.

Alice Mansergh will take up the position of Chief Executive Designate at **Tourism Ireland** from 18 Sep. Mansergh carries a collage of experience in the operational and B2B scenes, and currently serves as the Managing Director of Google Customer Solutions, UK & Ireland, and corporate reputation lead for Google's EMEA HQ. She was also the head of B2B customer marketing, EMEA before that.

Sven-Olof Lindblad has returned as Chief Executive Officer at **Lindblad Expeditions** from 30 Jun to ensure a smooth transition following the recent announcement of the departure of Dolf Berle, who is pursuing a non-competitive opportunity in the Dallas area.

Four new Aussie appointments have been announced by **La Vie Hotels & Resorts**, including **Abhey Sachdeva** joining as Business Development Manager, Australia, while **Andrew Martin** takes on the Group Manager of Sales position. **Justin Furkhan** has been named as Business Support Manager for Australia, and **Catriona McKay** has been promoted to Group Manager Revenue and Distribution. The new recruitments will allow La Vie to drive the strategic growth of its Sydney portfolio.

Wild Bush Luxury has announced two key appointments at its Bamurr Plains safari lodge, including **Matthew Bowen** as its new General Manager and **Matthias Beer** as its Head Chef. Bowen carries a wealth of experience, having worked at various lodge resorts including El Questro, Emma Gorge Resort and Lake Argyle Resort, as well as high-end yacht charter businesses. Beer has more than 24 years of experience in hospitality, and as the new Head Chef at the safari lodge, he will draw on the experience he's gathered from hotels and resorts around the world, including roles as executive chef at some of Australia's wilderness resorts such as El Questro and Longitude 131.

Travel Daily

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TTF outlook is strong

CROWN Sydney today played host to the Tourism and Transport Forum's (TTF) Outlook 2023 conference, with the one-day event welcoming a host of high-profile presenters and attendees.

The gathering was convened by TTF CEO Margy Osmond, who's **pictured** at right with Tourism Australia MD Phillipa Harrison.



A series of panel sessions discussing accommodation, aviation, cruising and more featured headline speakers including Carnival Australia's Marguerite Fitzgerald and Voyages Indigenous Tourism chief Matt Cameron-Smith (left).



Intrepid Travel APAC MD Brett Mitchell was also in attendance, and is **pictured** at right with Cruise Lines International Association Australasia MD Joel Katz.



LEFT: Paul McGrath, CEO of YHA Australia with The Travel Corporation Australia head Dave Hosking and Ben Hall, CEO of AAT Kings.



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