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Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today features six pages of the latest news including a front cover wrap from **Virgin Australia**, our **Sustainability** page, a photo page from **BNE** plus a full page from **The Travel Junction**.

Kevin to step down from NZCA CEO role

THE New Zealand Cruise Association (NZCA) will soon have a new chief after news of the retirement of Kevin O'Sullivan.

Jacqui Lloyd has been named as O'Sullivan's successor, where she will be charged with further building New Zealand's reputation as one of the world's most desirable cruise destinations.

Reflecting on O'Sullivan's tenure, Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA) MD Australasia Joel Katz said he had "played a key role in the successful revival of the country's cruise economy".

Commit to the Kimberley

EXCLUSIVE

TOURISM WA is imploring Australian travellers to hold on to their Kimberley bookings for 2023 despite flooding in the region impacting two national parks.

Speaking with *Travel Daily* this week, the tourism body confirmed the majority of operators in the Kimberley will be going ahead as planned with tours, with only a small number wholly affected by the closure of the Bandilngan (Windjana Gorge) & Danggu Geikie Gorge National Parks due to flooding.

"Tourism operators have reported that with some alterations, their itineraries remain incredible with many fantastic opportunities for visitors to explore the region," a Tourism WA spokesperson assured.

"The best way Australians can support the local tourism industry is to keep their 2023 bookings -

the Kimberley is an iconic tourism destination that is ready-and-waiting to welcome visitors for the upcoming tourism season."

The comments follow the WA Government launching a \$6 million Tourism Flood Recovery Package, which includes 19,000 discounted airfares from Perth to Broome and Kununurra, a national marketing campaign to drive more visitation, and a consumer incentive campaign offering \$500,000 worth of discounted tours and experiences for visitors heading to the region during the 2023 peak season.

MEANWHILE AAT Kings has partnered with G'day Group to offer savings of up to \$3,000 per couple (\$1,500 per person) on selected Kimberley tours booked between now and 19 May, for travel before 31 Mar 2024.

Agents can also go in the draw to win a Kimberley land tour, plus 50% off for a friend - info [HERE](#).

VA means business

VIRGIN Australia is highlighting its corporate travel offerings, which include great-value airfares, choice of cabins and seating, access to Premium Entry and Lounges, Velocity rewards, and much more.

Virgin Australia Business Flyer is a free-to-join business travel program for small-to-medium sized businesses (SMEs) - for more, see the **front page**.

JQ AKL/BNE route

JETSTAR has launched its first direct service between Auckland and Brisbane this week, offering four return flights per week.

The new route is expected to bring around 40,000 visitors a year to Brisbane, contributing an estimated \$25 million to the city's economy and marking the 17th service secured by Queensland's \$200m Attracting Aviation Investment fund.

Fares start from \$219 (one way).

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BOOKING SUPPORT

CATO Earth Day lunch

THE Council of Australian Tour Operators (CATO) has added a lunch event to its 2023 calendar to mark World Earth Day, taking place at the Calile Hotel, Fortitude Valley in Brisbane on Fri 21 Apr.

The annual global celebration began 50 years ago, and aims to raise awareness for the need to protect Earth's natural resources for future generations.

"As the peak industry body for the land-supply sector, it is important that we take a lead in highlighting the need for a sustainable and responsible approach to travel," Managing Director of CATO, Brett Jardine, explained.

"At our lunch time event, guests will be inspired by leaders from across the travel industry in a thought-provoking and impactful panel discussion, designed to educate and stimulate further

discussion," he added.

CATO also revealed that G Adventures will be the major sponsor for the event, with the Italian National Tourist Board and cruise line Hurtigruten to be supporting sponsors.

The gathering is open to all members of the travel industry, with tickets priced at \$135 per person or \$1,350 for a table of 10, which includes a two-course meal, beverages and post-event networking.

CLICK HERE to register, and for more sustainability news, see **page five**.

Conferma Boost

CONFERMA Pay has expanded its partnership with Boost Payment Solutions to develop a B2B virtual payment platform.

The new platform combines Conferma Pay's virtual payment technology with Boost's multi-patented straight-through processing (STP) solution to offer a secure, digitised and automated ecosystem that can handle high-volume virtual payments.

Conferma Pay CEO Jason Lalor is touting the platform as "a simpler, hassle-free solution that allows suppliers to be paid quickly", in addition to offering businesses "visibility, security, and flexibility over their payment process".

The renewal of the partnership comes at a time when Conferma Pay has seen an increased uptake of virtual cards, particularly in the travel sector.

It's a busy time for Conferma Pay, which was acquired by global technology company Sabre last year (**TD** 12 Aug 2022).

Rex hits back at QF

REX Airlines has hit back at Qantas' claims of being the most punctual major carrier for six months in a row (**TD** 23 Mar), today pointing out that Rex was the most on-time airline in Sep.

However, it appears the discrepancy is down to Qantas' cheeky language, with the Flying Kangaroo being careful to note it was more punctual than its "major competitor" (implied as Virgin Australia) for six consecutive months.

Qantas also referred to being the most punctual "major carrier", a not-so-subtle dig at Rex Airlines, which now operates on routes between Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane.

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COMO see Laucala Island



FIVE high-achieving Virtuoso agents were recently hosted on a famil trip by COMO Hotels and Resorts in the lead-up to the Virtuoso Owner Managers Forum.

The lucky group enjoyed a two-night itinerary at COMO Laucala Island in Fiji, one of the world's largest private island resorts.

Escorted by COMO's Global Director of Sales - Australia, NZ, Jonica Paramor, the agents enjoyed a number of experiences, including a farm tour with Executive Chef Daniel Boller.

Other highlights included spa treatments at COMO Shambhala Retreat, a morning stretch class, a tour of the resort's 18-Hole David Kidd McLay Championship Golf Course and Tennis Courts, dining experiences at Plantation House,

Rock Lounge, and Beach Bar.

Agents were also able to partake in water activities like snorkelling, jet skiing, and fishing.

Pictured: Louise Brown, Spencer Travel; Dale Wood, Travel Beyond; Judy Tanner, Aurora Travel; Craig Constable, CTM; Phil Smethurst, Bicton Travel; and Jonica Paramor, COMO Hotels & Resorts.

Really Cool Airlines

WHILE the name of the carrier may sound more like something a Baby Boomer would espouse, Thailand's upcoming Really Cool Airlines has announced plans to start air operations before the end of the year.

Sporting the slogan 'We Fly the Future', the airline has released very few details at this stage, however, the brand will reportedly be headed up by former CEO of Thai low-cost carrier Nok Air, Patee Sarasin, suggesting it may be looking to compete in the budget space.

Promotional images also suggest Airbus A350-900 aircraft may be used upon launch, if the airline receives Thai approval.

EY sale update

ETIHAD Airways has clarified that its global sale, originally published in **TD** yesterday, does not include Amsterdam.

Travellers can enjoy discounted fares to other select Etihad destinations until 31 Mar - find out more **HERE**.

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YEARS

 Wendy Wu Tours

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SAVE UP TO \$1,000^{PP} ON SELECTED 2023 DEPARTURES



Window Seat

WHY fly when you can swim?

That's exactly what 31-year-old Scottish man Andy Donaldson asked when he smashed the world record for the fastest swim across the Cook Strait earlier this month.

The speedy athlete made the 23km journey between New Zealand's North and South Islands in four hours and 33 minutes in a pair of Speedos, goggles and a swim cap.

Swimming through the dark of the night, Donaldson went up against strong tides and swam among great white sharks in order to beat the previous record, which had stood for 15 years, by just four minutes.

We'll take the ferry, thanks.



Interruptions in Germany & France

MANY flights across Germany were cancelled yesterday after transport workers engaged in a 24-hour "mega strike" to demand wage increases.

The walk-out also impacted commuter and regional trains operated by Deutsche Bahn, Germany's national rail operator, as well as local transport services, such as trams and buses.

MEANWHILE the Australian Govt is advising Aussies to exercise a high degree of caution in France as demonstrations about raising the retirement age continue to interrupt transport networks in Paris.

Ballina back online

REFLECTIONS Holiday Park Ballina will reopen for the first time in over a year after providing emergency housing to flood victims in Northern NSW.

The holiday park is offering 15% off midweek stays from now until Jun, and a 10% discount on stays seven nights or longer for the remainder of 2023.

For more details, [CLICK HERE](#).

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AFTA UPDATE

from Dean Long, CEO



WHILST the outlook for travel continues to improve, the importance of ongoing interaction around that matter is of paramount importance

for our sector. Last week I had the pleasure of sitting down with Federal Minister for Trade and Tourism Don Farrell and the leader of the Nationals, David Littleproud.

Our advocacy continues to be focused on ensuring our elected and Departmental officials understand and importantly value the economic and social contribution of all our ATAS businesses. We've also recently held briefings with the Austrade team across the country on the role of ATAS in setting and elevating our sector. One of the key lessons from COVID is that we must continue to engage and educate public servants of rigorous process ATAS businesses go through to achieve ATAS accreditation.

ATAS was established by our sector as a commitment to Government that we place our clients and good business

practices at the centre of what we do. We made a commitment that we would continue to undertake detailed financial assessments and enhance our support for when there is a disagreement between an ATAS business and its customers. This independent consumer complaint process is now overseen by a previous CEO of the ACCC. This is why we continue to engage with the Consumer Federation of Australia and Choice on the importance of continuous improvement across retail and independent agents, wholesalers, tour operators and consolidators to address any consumer concerns.

ATAS continues to be the largest and most representative travel accreditation scheme in the country. It links businesses who sell domestic and int'l travel to Australians, and in renewing your ATAS, or indeed joining if you're a new business, you are sending a message to your clients that together we are genuine travel professionals. As I have said many times before, joining ATAS is a meaningful demonstration to your colleagues and clients that you're a credible business, one that understands the importance of integrity and reliability.

Rotty goes Premium

HOLIDAYMAKERS will soon be able to enjoy a more luxurious mode of travel to Western Australia's Rottne Island, thanks to a new premium ferry service announced by Rottne Express.

The new service will run during the Easter and school holiday period from 29 Mar to 23 Apr, departing Perth CBD each morning and making the 90-minute scenic journey directly to Rottne Island.

Guests who have booked the premium service will receive complimentary bus pickup from Perth CBD hotels, morning refreshments including coffee, tea and pastries, 4pm premium ferry return service to Barrack Street, and wine and cheese tasting on return to Perth during the Swan River Cruise.

The new ferry service is available to book now, with fares starting from \$179 per person - [CLICK HERE](#) for more information.

EY resumes Kolkata

ETIHAD Airways has resumed daily flights between Abu Dhabi and Kolkata, India's financial capital, offering a total of seven weekly nonstop services using an Airbus A320 aircraft.

The first flight to Kolkata's Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose Airport landed on Sun, with pax greeted by a cake cutting ceremony and a celebration attended by Etihad and Kolkata Airport Executives.

NSW Tourism Minister

THE new NSW Labor Government has assigned John Graham to look after tourism in the state on an interim basis.

The Special Minister of State Minister for Roads, the Arts, and Night-time Economy and Music will incorporate tourism into his portfolio responsibility for now, until further cabinet confirmations are announced.

The previous NSW Tourism Minister was Ben Franklin.

BNE rejoices at return of Show & Go

BRISBANE Airport's Show & Go events are back! Over 60 travel agents enjoyed a recent evening with Air Canada and the Brisbane Airport team at the International Terminal, sipping on Canadian-inspired cocktails and savouring some poutine.

Two lucky winners, Wijayaayu Maclean from WM Travel and Tours and Tanya Plimmer from Brisbane Travel Centre, were whisked away for a night at the award-winning Pullman Brisbane Airport Hotel before checking in for their Air Canada flight to Vancouver the following morning.

Air Canada has also announced an increase to seat capacity between Brisbane and Vancouver, flying daily from June and using a larger aircraft from Oct.



BRISBANE Airport's Oliver Philpot, Anthony Ciccitini and Julie Leung, with Janis McDonald and Gavin Schofield from Air Canada.



DEBRA Gibb and Sarah McKenzie.



MARTES Beard, Tina Pizzoni and Sarah McKenzie.



DAMIAN Knuth took home the first of three lucky door prizes donated by Globite.



CAITLIN Dunster, Remy Koh and Tania Mansell.



CHRISTINE and David Burrus.



SANDY Chen strikes a pose.



ALL booked in for their flight – Wijayaayu Maclean, Janis McDonald and Tanya Plimmer.



RUSSELL Brown, Robert Caldwell and Caitlin Dunster.

WINNERS are Grinners! Wijayaayu Maclean and Tanya Plimmer are congratulated by Michelle Hanson, Janis McDonald and Oliver Philpot.



MARGARET Ong, Janis McDonald and Lourdes Plagens with Canadian wildlife.





Young leads plan

ACCOR Pacific has announced the appointment of David Young as its new Chief Sustainability Officer and Director of ESG.

His new role will see him lead the implementation of Accor's ESG and sustainability agenda across its 400 hotels, apartments and resorts in the Pacific region.

Young joins from oneworld alliance, where he worked as Global Program Director Sustainability, and prior to that he was the Executive Manager of Sustainability and ESG at the Qantas Group.

"Sustainability is redefining Accor's business model and shaping a new way of travelling," CEO Accor Pacific, Sarah Derry, said.

"We are pursuing an integrated business approach in the way we manage our ESG activities and our interactions with our people, guests, suppliers, partners, clients and communities.

"David is a subject matter expert with strong leadership skills, his vision for sustainability will make an outsized impact."

The appointment follows the hotel operator recently partnered with Ecotourism Australia to certify all its properties across Australia and the Pacific as Sustainable Tourism certified businesses.

HURTIGRUTEN ZEROES IN ON ZERO

HURTIGRUTEN Norway is sailing closer to its first zero emission ship, which it aims to build by 2030, after kicking off a new research project dedicated to developing innovative, emission-free solutions for the future of passenger vessels.

Hurtigruten teamed up with research institute SINTEF and 12 maritime partners to launch the Sea Zero project, which will work towards building emission-free ships for the cruise line, making zero-emission passenger and freight transport along the Norwegian coast possible by 2030.

Drawing on a budget of €13 million, the new consortium will explore battery solutions, propulsion technology, hull design, and sustainable building



practices to minimise energy use, with new energy solutions for onboard hotel operations also a key focus area.

Hurtigruten Norway Senior Vice President for Marine Operations, Gerry Larsson-Fedde, said, "we will turn every stone to cut both energy use, waste and emissions to a minimum.

"Consumers will not continue to accept the use of heavy fuel oil or climate targets that are way behind the Paris Agreement.

"Zero-emission ships will be the game-changer our industry needs," he emphasised.

Pictured: All partners gathered recently for kick off on the R&D-phase of Sea Zero.

HA SAF purchase

HAWAIIAN Airlines (HA) has agreed to purchase 50 million gallons of Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF) over a period of five years, from biofuel company Gevo, Inc.

The SAF will be produced in a yet-to-be-constructed facility in the Midwestern US, with deliveries to Hawaiian's gateway cities to start in 2029.

HA President and CEO Peter Ingram said the agreement will move the airline closer to its goal of net-zero carbon emissions by 2050.

MCEC Banksia

MELBOURNE Convention and Exhibition Centre (MCEC) hosted the 34th National Banksia Sustainability Awards last week, as well as sponsoring the Net Zero Leadership Award category.

It marked the second time MCEC had hosted the event, which recognises leaders in sustainability, biodiversity, climate change and First Nations, as part of a two-year partnership between the Centre and the Banksia Foundation.

HKIA on track

HONG Kong International Airport (HKIA) has partnered with SITA to monitor its carbon emissions as it progresses towards its net zero carbon goal.

The airport will implement SITA's carbon management platform later this year to track emissions data from 29 participating business partners, such as ground handling, to compare against key performance indicators towards HKIA's 2050 Net Zero Carbon Pledge.

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MONEY

WELCOME to Money, TD's Tue feature on what the Australian dollar is doing.

AU\$1 = US\$0.665

THE Australian dollar dipped 0.6% following the Deutsche Bank's sell-off last Fri, sparking more fears about the financial stability of banks around the world after the crumbling of SVB & Credit Suisse Bank.

Meanwhile, data on retail sales and monthly CPI are both due this week, which will provide key indications to RBA's next move as they seek to pause the rate hike in Apr.

Wholesale rates this morning.

US	\$0.665
UK	£0.541
NZ	\$1.073
Euro	€0.616
Japan	¥87.50
Thailand	฿22.90
China	¥4.579
South Africa	12.19
Canada	\$0.909
Crude oil	US\$74.99

BAW gets bubbly

PASSENGERS who are members of the British Airways' (BAW) Club World can now enjoy award-winning English Sparkling wines on board.

The Digby Fine English Brut NV is available now, as well as the Balfour Rosé de Noirs, Simpsons Chalklands Cuvee Brut NV, and Wiston Estate Brut NV, which will be available on a rotation basis.

BAW Director of Onboard Experience, Sajida Ismail, praised the introduction of the premium wine selection, with BAW to continue to search for more premium wines in other regions.

A famil of fire and ice



GATE 7 recently hosted a group of ski specialists on a 'Fire & Ice' famil in North Lake Tahoe for a thrilling experience on the region's best slopes.

After flying with Hawaiian Airlines via Honolulu into Sacramento, the agents made the two-hour drive to North Lake Tahoe, which is experiencing its snowiest season to date!

With over 14 metres of snow and the season expected to extend through to at least Jul this year, it was the perfect time for the group to hit the slopes at Palisades Tahoe, Northstar, and Diamond Peak.

Crown hacked?

CROWN Resorts has been contacted by a ransomware group which claims to have accessed some of the company's files.

Crown has assured customers that no data has been compromised, with an investigation currently underway to determine the validity of the ransomware claims.

To wrap up the trip, the lucky agents headed to Honolulu to defrost in the sunshine!

Pictured: Andrew Best, Hawaiian Airlines; David McMahon, Gate 7; Erica Davison, SkiMax Holidays; Michelle Nicholas, Ski Travel Company; Bart Peterson, North Lake Tahoe; and Michelle Gray, TravelPlan.

Your inner Noosa

A NEW campaign called Find Your Inner Noosa from Tourism Noosa was recently launched to highlight the region's natural beauty, and the slow, relaxed & laid-back way of life as an ideal travel destination.

A 60-second video will feature across television, digital channels, newspapers and magazines depicting destinations such as the Noosa Hinterland, Noosa North shore, promoting Noosa's dining options, accommodation, outdoor experiences, and thriving retail sector.

CLICK HERE to find out more about the campaign.

Qantas pay deal

QANTAS has avoided further industrial action from its cabin crew by signing a new pay deal with the staff group.

Following the new agreement, a Qantas spokesman said the deal would see increased pay for short-haul cabin crew and greater certainty for the business.

"Under the new agreement we can plan two sector days from home base to up to 12 hours and three sector days up to 11 hours," the airline added.

Silver Ray update

SILVERSEA Cruises and Meyer Werft have gathered travel advisors and stakeholders for a symbolic ceremony for upcoming *Silver Ray* at a shipyard in Papaenburg, Germany.

The keel laying is a tradition to mark the beginning of a ship's assembly, which will see the 728-guest vessel sail for service in summer 2024 alongside its sister ship, *Silver Nova*, set to become the most sustainable ships in the Nova Class - find out more details about the upcoming ship **HERE**.

Israeli disruptions

TRAVELLERS to Israel are being advised to exercise a high degree of caution as protests and strikes are occurring across the nation.

Transportation, including routes via Ben Gurion Airport have been disrupted, with civil unrest and the threat of terrorist attacks possible as security remains unpredictable in the West Bank.

DFAT is advising travellers in the region to constantly monitor local media for updates and follow advice from authorities.



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