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Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today features eight pages of the latest travel industry news including our **Sustainability** page, plus a front cover wrap from **CVFR Consolidation Services** and a full page from **Ponant**.

Air agreements need reform

AUSTRALIAN Travel Industry Association (ATIA) CEO Dean Long has appeared before a Senate Committee Inquiry into Bilateral Air Service Agreements today, where he has put forward the case for urgent reform (**TD** breaking news).

Long said in a statement before his appearance that an ATIA submission will contend there are "critical flaws" in the existing system, which does not allow for a fair say for all stakeholders in determining supply and demand.

"The Senate Committee Inquiry offers a pivotal opportunity to address the issues that have long plagued Australia's aviation industry and air ticket distribution landscape, with ATIA taking the lead in this fight for our members and the broader travel industry," Long said.

"Despite ATIA's members selling a staggering 10 million tickets, amounting to a total value of \$14

billion over the past 12 months until Aug, the Department of Transport fails to consider their perspective when deciding which bilateral aviation agreements to approve," he added.

Long also argued that New Distribution Capability (NDC) has had a detrimental impact on Australian travellers, with the technology's adoption allowing airlines to assume the role of sole price makers and therefore enhance profit margins.

"We are seeing the current application of NDC translate into limited choices for Australian consumers and businesses, increased airfares, and a further reduction in competition within the air ticket distribution market," the ATIA chief claimed.

The submission has been delivered by Long at a Senate Select Committee on Bilateral Air Service Agreements taking place in Sydney, which is tipped to see Alan Joyce provide insights on the Qatar Airways controversy.

More from Long on **page six**.

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15%
on over 400
tour departures*

*T&C's apply. Valid for land only tours.

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Uluru Base Walk

Silversea incentives

SILVERSEA Cruises has unveiled its "sell and sail" incentive, with the first 50 travel advisors booking two or more select oceangoing voyages to earn a suite on a three-to-five-night close-to-home sailing.

The incentive, which finishes at the end of next month, offers a suite for the advisor and a travelling companion, with \$250 on offer for subsequent bookings - more in today's **Cruise Weekly**.

Fiji flags Noumea

FIJI Airways will start flying from Nadi to the New Caledonian capital of Noumea from 07 Dec, operating twice weekly.

Noumea is the third new market added to the carrier's network since international borders opened in Dec 2021, bringing the number of destinations it will fly to directly to 26 globally.

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EXPLORE MORE



Ponant Kimberley

PONANT is including return flights and transfers on all 2024 expeditions, starting from \$12,815 per person.

Travellers also have the option to fly Business class when they book in select suites - see the **back page** for details.

TTC is the joker in the pack



THREE lucky travel agents reached under their Event Cinema theatre seats and won gift packs at The Travel Corporation's Tour (TTC) Brands recent launch event in Sydney.

Part of a national roadshow of 41 different events, agents had the opportunity to learn more about TTC's "full house" of tour brands, with the Ace, King, Queen, Jack and Joker all representing different styles of touring, from luxury to youth.

"Which is the winning card? It depends which game you're playing. Whatever their budget or depending on who they're travelling with, we have something for you," said Carla Dabit, TTC Sales Manager.

Dabit also highlighted the advantages of having one sales team, call centre and booking platform for agents to work with.

She also observed that many travellers are doing back-to-back trips to maximise the ground

component after spending a fortune on airfares, with Dabit encouraging agents to take the opportunity to upsell.

After the presentation guests munched on choc-tops and popcorn and watched the on-screen antics of *My Big Fat Greek Wedding 3*, filmed in Athens and Corfu, destinations on offer through Contiki and Trafalgar.

Meanwhile, TTC also revealed it has an exciting agent family to Egypt scheduled for next year. *DA*

CATO Mints partner

MINT Payments has joined the Council of Australian Tour Operators (CATO) this week as a platinum partner.

This strategic partnership strengthens Mint's commitment to travel by extending support to the supply side of the industry.

Mint said it will work closely with CATO to support members with the payment strategy.

VA planes pulled

VIRGIN Australia domestic services between Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane and Perth may be impacted by mechanical issues on two of its aircraft.

As a result of the issues, the carrier has pulled two of its Boeing 737-800 jets from the fleet after becoming aware the planes' engines were fitted with unauthorised parts.

The airline was only notified of the safety breach after a Bloomberg report claimed falsified certification documents for aircraft parts had been issued by British-based supplier AOG Technics, a company which supplies engine parts for A320s and B737s around the world.

"We apply a highly stringent approach to maintenance to ensure our safety standard is upheld," a spokesperson for Virgin Australia told *Travel Daily*.

Vietjet adds PayID

AUSTRALIAN travellers can now book Vietjet flights using PayID, allowing them to avoid any processing surcharges.

The carrier's new payment option is powered by Australian fintech Azupay, a leading provider of payment solutions for businesses using Australia's New Payments Platform.

Vietjet Executive Vice President Nguyen Thanh Son said PayID is "an excellent alternative to using credit cards" and provides travellers with "a seamless payment experience".

itravel



COLA MAURIRERE

itravel Franchise Darwin, NT

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More capacity, lower cost

FLIGHT Centre Travel Group (FCTG) CEO Graham Turner has reaffirmed to a Senate Select Committee on Bilateral Air Service Agreements that allowing more capacity into the local market from carriers like Qatar Airways will drive down airfares.

Part of a list of proposals presented to the Committee this afternoon, Turner highlighted that recently added Qatar capacity in New Zealand saw air ticket prices drop by 10% on a month-on-month basis, and suggested it is "clear evidence" that more capacity equals more affordable airfares.

Turner also called on the Federal Government to employ the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission in future bilateral air decisions, at the very least in a consultative capacity, in the same way they do currently with codeshare agreements.

Travel agents, tour operators

and airports should also be consulted by the government before any air agreements are formalised, Turner argued, adding that there is also a need to foster more Open Skies agreements with more countries.

"At the moment we have only nine countries that Australia has an Open Skies agreement with now, the United States for example has more than 100 and we think there is a tremendous amount of opportunity there," Turner indicated.

The FCTG head also advocated for reform when it comes to airport slots, suggesting that the current 80:20 rule should be changed to 95:5 to help support the rights of Aussie travellers.

Currently, the 80:20 rule means airlines only need to use a minimum of 80% of take-off slots to retain them, often keeping competitors from entering key aviation hubs. *AB*

Chomping down on bad publicity

ENHANCED safety messaging and more rangers on the ground will be in force in K'gari following a string of nasty dingo maulings on the island in recent months.

The new resources will be created on the back of new funding from the Qld Government, which revealed over the weekend that it will invest an extra \$2 million in funding this financial year and an additional \$3 million annually to support enhanced tourist safety.

New safety messaging collateral will be handed out to tourists when they obtain camping permits and at various arrival points on the Queensland island.

"The message to those visiting K'gari is simple...always be alert to the presence of wongari (dingoes), heed the safety messages, and educate yourself about how to behave around wongari," the Qld Govt said.

Qantas 24hr sale

QANTAS has kicked off a 24-hour sale on flights to and from Melbourne and Sydney ahead of the AFL Grand Final weekend.

The promotion includes fares between Melbourne and Sydney, and Brisbane and Sydney from \$139 one-way; Brisbane-Melbourne from \$175 one-way; and Auckland-Sydney from NZ\$249 one-way.

Footy fans can score the discounted fares until 10am AEST tomorrow via qantas.com and travel agents.

FCTG, Traveltek

FLIGHT Centre Travel Group (FCTG) has signed a new agreement with Traveltek, which will see the tech company power FCTG's cruise growth plans for its leisure businesses in North America, Canada, the UK and South Africa, as well as continue to support the leisure businesses in Australia and New Zealand.

Fill your heart with
Ireland 

What
fills my
heart?

The interesting cities

- Eric



Interest surges despite cost

SEARCHES for international return Economy flights during the Jun school holidays are up 69% compared to 2019, a new study compiled by Kayak has shown.

The same report also revealed that searches for domestic return Economy flights during the same period are up 143% compared to pre-COVID volumes.

However search interest wasn't the only factor to increase, with prices for air tickets rising by 8% on average when compared to 2019, with overseas return Economy tickets setting back travellers around \$1,880.

On the domestic front, airfares are costing Aussies just over \$400 on average, with Thu revealed to be the most affordable day of the week to travel at a \$385 average for return Economy tickets, while Sun was found to be the most pricey day to jet off, costing consumers \$432 on average for return Economy airfares.

Meanwhile for international travel, Thu is the thriftiest day to travel (\$1,827 on average), offering savings of approximately \$96 when contrasted with the most expensive day of Sat.

The Kayak study also concurred with recent ABS statistics which show Bali continues to be the number one leisure destination for Aussie travellers, almost doubling in search interest from last year, while Tokyo, Bangkok and Ho Chi Minh City have all surged in popularity over the last 12 months.

For those looking to rein in the travel budget, the Icelandic capital of Reykjavik (\$3,634), Montreal (\$3,362) and Newcastle upon Tyne in the UK (\$3,297) were all found to be the most expensive cities to visit during the upcoming school holiday period.

Domestically, Melbourne topped the list of most popular travel destinations. *AB*

ATEC China tutorial

AUSSIE agents can refresh their knowledge of the China visitor market by participating in the Australian Tourism Export Council's (ATEC) latest Tourism Tutorial series.

The session will cover Chinese inbound tourism, the Chinese distribution system, and more.

The online tutorial takes place tomorrow at 11am AEST - **CLICK HERE** to sign up.

RCI adults escape

ROYAL Caribbean International (RCI) has revealed Hideaway Beach, the first adults-only escape on the cruise line's private island Perfect Day at CocoCay.

The all-new "beachfront paradise" will open in The Bahamas in Jan, with the debut of Royal Caribbean's new ship *Icon of the Seas*.

The experience is complete with a private beach and pools, drinks, bites, cabanas, and more.

Andrews undecided

VICTORIAN Premier Dan Andrews has remained tight-lipped on whether his government will implement a tax on short-term accommodation platforms like Airbnb and Stayz.

The Premier was quizzed this week on *ABC Melbourne* about the prospect of a new daily levy on short-term holiday rentals, with Andrews indicating that the policy remains on the table but is yet to be confirmed.

"I'm not going to rule that in or out," he responded.

"There's between 30,000 and 40,000 homes that are being Airbnb-ed or on other platforms, so they're short stay which means they're not available for someone to lease to rent on a longer term."

A tax is speculated to be included in the Victorian Government's new housing policy to be launched next week.

The news follows Melbourne agreeing to crack down on short-term rentals (*TD* 31 Aug).



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Travel Daily
A Conversation with Jean Summers-Reeves of Clean Cruising
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I live to ilearn at itravel



ITRAVEL held the first of its new monthly ilearn Live events last Thu, with members gathering alongside 20 key partners for a day of learning, connecting and networking, complete with a market-style showcase, 'power presentations' and masterclasses.

"As we continue to grow nationally, we want our entire network to attend these events so we have introduced a travel subsidy to help cover the travel cost," CEO Steve Labroski said.

Pictured: Labroski; Imogen Brown; Melissa Graham, itravel Penrith; Rane Reguson, Reguson Travel & Cruise Qld; Ben Lord, Expert Class Travel Vic; Caroline Owens, itravel Sutherland; Julie Sebalj, itravel Eastern Creek; Youseff Maarbani, itravel Liverpool; Hamish Naicker, Mobile NSW; Kiara Helac, K A Travel Qld; Stef Scuderi, Jetsetter Travel Qld; Maria Esteves, itravel Carlingford; and Therese Oliver, itravel Naracoorte. *JM*



Window Seat

AT A time when airlines are striving to cut down their carbon emissions, it was rather surprising to learn that an empty governmental aircraft embarked on a 45-minute flight just to pick up one politician.

German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock is under fire after a visit to the US last week, during which time she used an A350 to fly from Austin to Houston, which only takes around two-and-a-half hours by road, to pick her up.

The wasteful flight occurred despite Baerbock having made assurances to the public that she would minimise the environmental impact of her travel as much as possible.

And to top it off, she's a member of The Greens party!

Ponant bundling

PONANT has announced the addition of inclusive excursions on all of its winter 2024/25 expedition cruises.

Bookings are now open on 17 itineraries encompassing Asia, Oceania, Antarctica and Northern Europe, with one excursion included per port of call.

The excursions include local culture and heritage activities, outdoor sports, artistic events, and free time.

See the full offering [HERE](#).

MEL chooses Nunn

MELBOURNE Airport has appointed Nunn Media as its new media agency following an account review.

According to *Mumbrella*, the agency scored the major air hub's account after demonstrating a clear understanding of MEL's consumers, brand, and business requirements through a results-driven media approach.

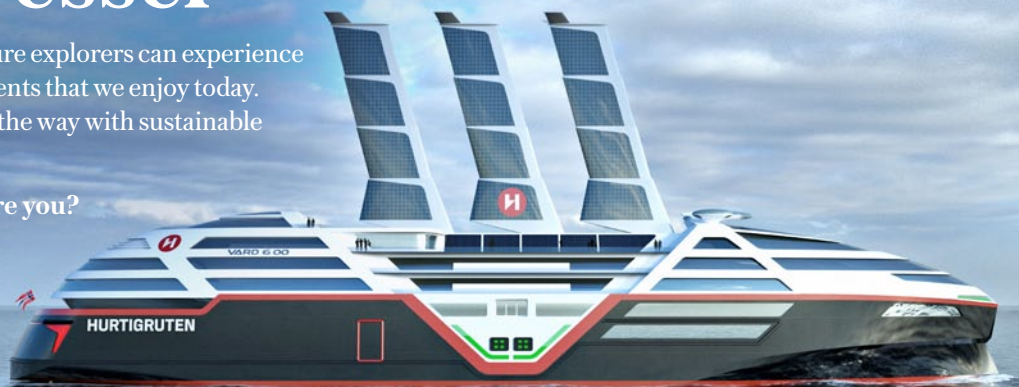


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ATIA UPDATE

from Dean Long, CEO

ATIA APPEARS BEFORE CRUCIAL SENATE INQUIRY ON BILATERAL AIR AGREEMENTS



THIS morning, I am proud to be appearing before the Senate Committee Inquiry into Bilateral Air Service Agreements. This inquiry

is a critical first step in reforming a broken system.

Australia's bilateral air agreements, which significantly influence the country's connectivity, are falling behind international standards. While Australia has just nine open skies agreements, the United States boasts an impressive 100, Singapore 60, and Canada 23.

Currently only 57 airlines operate in the country, an 11% decrease from 2019 levels, which severely limits traveller choices.

The current system, which determines the airlines that fly in and out of Australia, was invented in 1944. It was designed to promote the interests of national carriers at a time when most were government-owned. That is no longer the case.

The system currently requires only consideration of the interests of the national carrier and not the interests of the travelling public, and those agents who support

them must also be considered.

Despite the fact that our members sold 10 million tickets alone, worth \$14 billion for the 12 months to Aug, the Department of Transport doesn't consider us when deciding which bilateral aviation agreements to approve.

ATIA's submission to the inquiry points out the critical flaws in a system currently overseen by a department and minister that often lack a comprehensive understanding of how their decisions affect passengers. The need for reform is evident as all stakeholders should have a direct say on supply, not just the airlines.

Our submission also highlights the current detrimental effects of the New Distribution Capability (NDC) on Australian consumers, advocating for the necessary changes that will benefit our members as well as the broader travel industry.

NDC's adoption has allowed

airlines to assume the role of sole price makers, affording them the liberty to enhance profit margins on their most affordable products without market competition pressure. This transformation has brought about notable consequences, with serious ramifications for Australian

consumers and for agents who support them.

NDC's shortcomings mean limited choices for Australian consumers and businesses, increased airfares and a further reduction in competition.

While airlines may have succeeded in expanding their margins by directing more fares

through their own channels, these actions have resulted in a net loss of competition within the distribution market. The implications of such practices are profound, making it increasingly challenging for consumers to compare different price points

and trust the fare information available on aggregator websites, as they must navigate to each airline's individual sales channel for verification.

When consumers are compelled to visit airline websites directly to access fares, they miss out on the invaluable services that travel agents provide. These services include professional advice tailored to individual travel requests, assistance with essential travel requirements like visas, travel documentation, medical necessities, and travel insurance.

Travel agents also play a crucial and complex role in supporting consumers when travel-related issues arise even when tickets have been booked direct via NDC.

ATIA is championing its members' cause by advocating for swift and effective changes to address these pressing issues. The association emphasises the critical need to redefine national interest as a compelling factor in decision-making. Additionally, ATIA calls for the ACCC to conduct comprehensive assessments of the consumer benefits associated with each application, with results being made public. Furthermore, equal opportunities for review and recommendation should be extended to the travel industry, airports, and airlines.

“
Australia's
air bilateral
agreements are
falling behind
international
standards
”

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Caribbean plan

SUSTAINABLE tourism is “a commitment that Caribbean leaders are taking seriously”, Caribbean Tourism Organization (CTO) Chairman Kenneth Bryan told attendees at the inaugural USA-Caribbean Investment Forum in New York last week.

Governments must seek out more sustainable investment and innovation, Bryan said, urging investors to focus on projects that foster sustainable tourism and a positive social impact.

Phuket concerns

THE Phuket Airport expansion may have a detrimental environmental impact, according to C9 Hotel Works founder and Managing Director Bill Barnett.

He argued that the expansion plans are “only a Band-Aid” for Thailand’s tourism recovery, and said the hub’s ability to handle peak period passenger traffic is “a recurring issue” that will be “compounded by the steady return of Chinese tourists this year”.

Barnett, who is an advocate for sustainable tourism, said a second airport is needed, in addition to a “sustainable transportation and infrastructure master plan”.

AUSTRALIA NEEDS A SAF FRAMEWORK

AUSTRALIAN aviation stakeholders are seeking a more supportive regulatory and policy environment to increase the domestic production of sustainable aviation fuel (SAF), a recently released *Aviation Green Paper* has concluded.

Among the recommendations put forward by the industry in the report is the establishment of a national framework for Voluntary Consumer Purchasing.

The newly-established Jet Zero Council will be charged with exploring the creation of the mooted framework in the short-to mid-term, flagging the aim of encouraging more customers to opt in to purchase a portion of SAF to cover their flights.

The report also noted the importance of countering



greenwashing perceptions among travellers and a need to create a better “social licence” around SAF use, with recommendations to implement more education and certification initiatives through industry and the community.

Another important pillar for increased SAF use includes making sure the benefits can be accounted for through existing reporting mechanisms, creating more demand for domestically produced SAF through

government procurement, as well as the consideration of grants, subsidies and partnerships with industry participants seeking to produce SAF in Australia.

Globally, the production of SAF in 2022 saw between 300 and 450 million litres produced, representing three-and-a-half times the 100 million litres of manufactured in 2021.

At present, there is no SAF incorporated into Australia’s jet fuel supply. *AB*

Every drop counts

THE International Air Transport Association (IATA) has published the latest result from its Fuel Efficiency Gap Analysis (FEGA).

Since launching in 2005, the audit has helped airlines identify cumulative savings of 15.2 million tonnes of carbon by cutting fuel consumption by 4.76 million tonnes.

One of the carriers to use the tool, LOT Polish Airlines, has identified the potential to cut tens of thousands of tonnes of carbon each year.

MSC eco voyage

MSC Cruises has revealed that its first net zero greenhouse gas emissions cruise ship voyage, achieved by *MSC Euribia* in Jun, achieved an overall saving of 43 tonnes of fuel.

The new 6,300-pax ship, which is powered by bio-LNG, never had to use more than two of its four engines during its four-day maiden sailing from France to Denmark, thanks to its optimal speed profiles, routing, trim and engine configuration.

Pimalai preserves

PIMALAI Resort & Spa in Koh Lanta, Thailand has teamed up with the local community to embark on a series of environmental and social activities to help preserve the island.

The Pimalai team joined community members for a reforestation project, which saw 150 trees planted in the Klong Chak area of Koh Lanta, as well as participating in a beach cleaning exercise and helped to establish a rice cultivation cooperative.

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Thai treat for Adelaide agents



SINGAPORE Airlines (SIA), Tourism Authority Thailand (TAT) and Minor Hotels recently invited members of the Adelaide travel trade to a celebratory evening to showcase Thailand's latest tourism offerings.

Guests gathered at Lantern by Nu, a Thai restaurant in Adelaide's CBD, where they learned all about the range of flights, destinations, and accommodation offerings available across the country.

There were also some generous lucky door prizes on offer, which saw two agents walk away with return tickets to Thailand and accommodation, courtesy of Minor Hotels.

A new incentive for South Australian agents was also launched at the event, providing an opportunity for the top Thailand seller by pax numbers in SA to score a trip for two to the Southeast Asian paradise.

The incentive runs between 13 Sep and 13 Oct - more information can be found through Agent360 [HERE](#).

Pictured: Sherly Handjojo, TAT; Busakorn Prommanot, TAT; Nicholas Sherrard, SIA; and Tori Van Der Biezen, Flight Centre Golden Grove. *JM*

Andaz Macau opens

HYATT Hotels Corporation has debuted its Andaz Brand in Macau, with the opening of the 700-key Andaz Macau.

The two-tower Andaz Macau hotel is located between the neighbourhoods of Old Taipa and Coloane, with the property boasting a pool, a fitness centre and access to the Grand Resort Deck at Galaxy Macau, as well as large meeting facilities.

Mexico air safety

THE United States' Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has reinstated Mexico's category 1 aviation safety rating, after the country was downgraded to category 2 for two years.

The International Air Transport Association (IATA) praised the decision, which comes after an improvement in the safety, regulatory and efficiency of Mexico's air transport system.

With Mexican airlines facing less restrictions, the post-pandemic recovery of the Mexico-US market will ramp up, IATA pointed out.

GK brings Japan's ski paradise closer

JETSTAR Japan (GK) has announced a new route between Tokyo (Narita) and Asashikawa, which will commence on 15 Dec.

Coinciding with Jetstar's launch of the Brisbane and Narita service from 03 Dec, the carrier is aiming to connect more ski aficionados from Australia to Hokkaido's second largest city.

GK will be the only low-cost airline to operate the route.

MGM gets hacked

TWO American hotel and casino organisations, MGM Resorts and Caesars Entertainment, have fallen victim to separate cyber attacks over the past week.

MGM has faced widespread system outages and service disruptions at its LA properties, while many of Caesar's loyalty program members' social security numbers and driver's license numbers were also stolen.

MONEY

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

AU\$1 = US\$0.644

THE Australian dollar remained resilient against a surging US dollar this week, fetching around 64.4 US cents.

It also scored minor gains in the past week against major currencies, including a 0.8 cent gain against the Japanese yen, over one-cent against the British pound, however dropped 0.6 cents against the Canadian dollar.

Wholesale rates this morning.

US	\$0.644
UK	£0.520
NZ	\$1.088
Euro	€0.602
Japan	¥95.01
Thailand	฿23.98
China	¥4.694
South Africa	12.23
Canada	\$0.868
Crude oil	US\$93.93

Charges dropped

WHAKAARI Management Limited (WML) is the last remaining defendant on trial for the Whakaari White Island volcano, which killed 22 people in Dec 2019 (*TD* 10 Jul).

Charges against WML owners James, Andrew and Peter Buttler were dismissed last week, while this morning, charges against Tauranga Tourism Services and ID Tours Limited were also dropped. The trial resumes on Thu.

BNE's spring surge

BRISBANE Airport (BNE) is anticipating its busiest post-COVID day on Fri 29 Sep, with an estimated 70,000 pax to pass through the hub as school breaks for the spring holidays.

Overall, 1.65 million people are expected to move through BNE over the school holiday period.

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