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ATIA's digital funds push

EXCLUSIVE

ONGOING cybersecurity attacks on large and high-profile businesses has led ATIA to launch a push for government funding to help travel intermediaries bolster their digital defences.

In a wide-ranging submission to the Federal Government's 2024 Budget, seen by *Travel Daily*, ATIA is urging the government to invest in cybersecurity training for smaller businesses to ensure they are equipped to manage the risks associated with trading online.

ATIA's Pre-Budget funding push also calls for investment into the Australian Passport Office to enhance the digital application and renewal process.

The submission calls for funding to help travel agents provide higher levels of customer service relating to passport applications.

The 15-page document also seeks government support to ensure an appropriately skilled

workforce through a 30% wage subsidy for traineeships including reinstatement of a \$2,500 incentive for course completion and a \$5,000 bonus for trainees.

Other measures being sought include the extension of the Skills Training Boost and the Technology Investment Boost, both of which will end on 30 Jun.

"We are asking for common-sense action including on key support for the 92% of ATIA members who are small businesses on measures such as cybersecurity, privacy and training as well as ongoing assistance in addressing the massive ongoing workforce and skills shortage," ATIA Chief Dean Long said. *ML*

Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today features five pages of the latest travel industry news, plus a cover wrap from Viking.

New Year, Great Fares

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New Tahiti webinar

AGENTS are invited to register for a 30-minute webinar hosted by Tahiti Tourisme, covering all the latest about the island nation including new hotel openings.

Hosted by Rita Mardirossian, the session takes place at 10am AEDT on 31 Jan - **CLICK HERE**.

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EK doubles down on PER

EMIRATES has boosted its services Down Under with a second daily service between Dubai and Perth, as well as adding more capacity on its Brisbane route.

From 01 Dec, the resumption of the carrier's second service to Perth will increase weekly capacity to Australia by an extra 6,900 seats.

"The return of this second daily service shows the commitment and confidence that Emirates has in the Western Australian market, and we will be working with the airline to ensure this second service is as popular as its current one," Perth Airport CEO Scott Woodward said.

Emirates is also set to ramp up capacity on its Queensland route, upgrading its second daily flight between Dubai and Brisbane, which has been operated by a Boeing 777-300ER since Jun 2023, to the larger A380 from 01 Oct.

The boost will see an extra 100,000 passengers per year travel between Europe and the Sunshine State.

Emirates Divisional Vice President Australasia, Barry Brown, said the double daily Perth and Brisbane flights are "a testament to our commitment in enhancing global connectivity to our Australian gateways and supporting tourism and trade growth opportunities". JM

Sun Princess delays

PRINCESS Cruises has delayed the debut of its new *Sun Princess* by mutual consent with Italian shipbuilder Fincantieri.

The ship's 10-day maiden voyage - originally set to sail from Barcelona - will now depart from Rome on 18 Feb, with affected pax receiving full refunds, a 50% future cruise credit and up to US\$200 in airfare change fees.

Highlights of Sri Lanka

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Aurora receives a B

EXCLUSIVE

AUSSIE-OWNED Aurora Expeditions has joined Intrepid Travel as two of the largest tourism companies to achieve B Corporation certification.

The company's latest sustainability milestone has seen it become the first major cruise operator to achieve the certification, Chief Executive Officer Michael Heath exclusively revealed to *Travel Daily*.

Aurora was assessed on its impact across five key areas over the past three years: governance, workers, community, environment, and customers, with the certification a culmination of Aurora's efforts to embed company-wide sustainable practices.

Key to Aurora's certification was its portfolio of sustainability programs, such as its 100% climate neutral status - for more details, see today's *CW*.



Window Seat

FLIGHTS can be disrupted and turned around for a variety of reasons, not all of them sinister, depending on your personal perspective.

Take a routine American Airlines flight between Phoenix, AZ and Austin, TX earlier this month, which left a bad smell in the nostrils of many when the plane returned to the gate to remove a passenger for loudly farting at others.

Granted, the man was also being obnoxious, with some commenting on Reddit that he appeared disgruntled and possibly hungover, but the passing gas was the final straw.

Fortunately, the man didn't put up a fight when asked to leave the plane.

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Sargent sets off

INSIDE Travel Group Trade Manager Harry Sargent is hanging up his hat after 18 years with the company, whose brands include InsideJapan and InsideAsia, in order to pursue new opportunities.

Originally from the UK, Sargent relocated to Brisbane in 2016 to help establish the operator's Australian branch, and played a pivotal role in launching the InsideAsia brand in the local market in 2021.

Inside Travel Group Australia Branch Director Tim Oakes said that while he is "sad to see Harry go", his departure "comes at a time when our reservations team is stronger than ever".

The tour operator has begun recruiting for Sargent's replacement, who will oversee the next phase of the England-based company's growth.

Aston's QF dossier

OUTSPOKEN Qantas critic and former author of *The Australian Financial Review's* 'Rear Window' column, Joe Aston, is now writing a book about the airline.

Aston's frequent and brutal takedowns of the carrier and its former CEO Alan Joyce and outgoing Chairman Richard Goyder saw the *AFR* temporarily removed from Qantas lounges before being reinstated.

Titled *The Chairman's Lounge*, the book is being published by Simon & Schuster and is tipped for release later this year.

Gen Z choose travel over property

TWO in three of Australians from Generation Y and Z are looking to choose travel over property ownership, according to research from travel insurance provider InsureandGo.

Almost three-quarters (71%) of under-30s and 65% of 31-50-year-olds would rather travel than buy a house over the next 12 months, the research found.

The average Australian spent \$974 on a single holiday over the year leading up to Sep.

CCO Jonathan Etkind said this sentiment is being fuelled by the after-effects of the pandemic.

"When forced to choose between an eye-watering mortgage and a travel experience, Millennials and Gen Z Australians are opting for the latter," he said.

"This trend is fuelled by the 'experience culture' that erupted over the past decade and saw young Aussies eschew spending money on 'stuff' to making memories instead."

GOL on the brink

BRAZILIAN low-cost carrier GOL Linhas Aereas has filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection in the United States.

The carrier is awaiting external financing it says should arrive in the next week or so and is using the protection to restructure its operations and shore up business practices to ensure long-term survival without disruption.

WSI is now ready to run(way)



A MAJOR milestone has been reached at Western Sydney International Airport, with the final layer of asphalt being laid on the 3.7km runway.

Line markings and installation of some 3,000 runway lights are yet to be completed but will be carried out later this year.

Western Sydney International CEO, Simon Hickey, said the completion solidifies the progress being made on the facility ahead of its opening in late 2026.

"Nothing says 'airport' more than a runway, so we're proud to reach this important milestone in bringing Sydney's new airport to life," Hickey said.

"On opening WSI will provide 20 more flights an hour for Sydney, which will give Sydneysiders more choice and place downward pressure on airfares."

All up, around 55,000 tonnes of asphalt has been laid - enough to cover 41 football fields.

Runway construction firm CPB Contractors Acciona Joint Venture Project Director, Christian Byrne, said his team has been placing asphalt for the past three months, with 270 tonnes going down every hour, all made on-site. *ML*

Stay with the NRL

HOTEL rooms themed on NRL clubs and iconic players could be in the works after the National Rugby League completed the purchase of Mercure Kawana Waters on the Sunshine Coast.

According to *Nine News*, rooms adorned with team colours and images of legends such as Wally Lewis are among the NRL's plans.

The National Rugby League has committed \$300 million to build an asset portfolio and help to future-proof the sport.

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Agent partners aced by P&O



VALUE for money is a central pillar of the P&O Cruises guest experience, but even its valued agent partners couldn't stay awake until 3:39am to see Danill Medvedev's Australian Open triumph against Emil Ruusuvuori.

Despite what became the third-latest finish in Australian Open history, P&O Cruises' guests enjoyed a fantastic night of the world's best tennis action from stylish digs at Rod Laver Arena.

Before the men's singles match, the group were kept on the edge of their seats during the prior match - a nail-biting epic between 2022 Wimbledon Ladies Champion Elena Rybakina and rising star Anna Blinkova, ultimately won by the latter. *ML*

Pictured above in back row from left is Kathryn Robertson, Carnival Australia; Andrew Zhang, Cruise Guru; Leighton Schembri, Luxury Escapes; Rochelle Clark, eCruising; Anne Calder, Ozcruising; Gareth Evison, Imagine Holidays; Tracey

Bremner, Clean Cruising; John Williams, OVC; Lucy Woodward, RACV; Shawn Walliss, Travelrite; Alex Pikardt, P&O Cruises; and Dan Russell, Clean Cruising.

Front row: Angus Mackay, P&O Cruises; Nola Melamet, P&O Cruises; Michelle Julius-Baty, MyCruises; Adam Cosgrove, South Sydney Rabbitohs; Erin King, P&O Cruises; and Brooke Rand, RAA. *ML*

Azamara hits Easter

AZAMARA Cruises has marked its first-ever visit to Easter Island after *Azamara Onward* called to the mysterious locale during its 2024 World Cruise.

During the visit, guests eagerly disembarked to wander among the 1,000 famous Moai statues and explore its rich culture.

For those eager to see Easter Island for themselves, Azamara is scheduled to call again during its 2026 World Cruise, available now.

The Chat

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Tourism honours its stars

LEGENDS of the Australian travel and tourism industry were recognised for their service to the sector in the 2024 Australia Day Honours List this past weekend.

Founding Board Member of the Tourism Council WA and current Mandurah Tourism Chair, Patricia Strahan (**pictured**) claimed the highest honour, named a Member of the Order of Australia.

Congratulations also to the following people for outstanding and ongoing careers working to advance travel and tourism.

- Penelope Fowler AM - current Tourism Australia board member.
- John Irving AM - Former South Australia Tourism Commission Board Member (2011-2022).
- Sheila McHale AM - Former WA Tourism Minister (2006-2008).
- Lynette Adamson AM - Former Tourism Western Australia board member (2006-2010).
- David Robson OAM - Former CEO of the Aviation Theory Centre (1998-2023).
- Colin Dunn OAM - Founder and current Executive Officer for the Bureau of Accessible Tourism.
- Janette Hyde OAM - Current President of the Port Macquarie Tourism Association.



- Jennifer Lambert OAM - Former CEO of the National Tourism Alliance (2007-2010).
- Paul Rogers OAM - Former Director of Tourism Hawkesbury.
- Elaine Sandow OAM - Founder and current Chairperson of the Milparinka Heritage and Tourism Association.
- John Tulloch OAM - Former President of the Hunter Valley Wine and Tourism Association.

HA Dreamliner start

HAWAIIAN Airlines will debut its new Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner on 15 Apr with service between Honolulu and San Francisco.

From 15 May, flights on the carrier's new aircraft will expand to other cities in its US mainland network, operating selected services to LA and Phoenix.

Strong demand will also see Hawaiian increase services from the end of May, with LAX boosted to four-times daily until 02 Sep; LAS growing to daily; and both Austin and Boston gaining an extra weekly service.

AA cleared for HND

AMERICAN Airlines has been granted tentative approval to begin nonstop daily flights between New York JFK and Tokyo Haneda, joining oneworld partner Japan Airlines on the route.



#TRAVELINSPO

Check out which destinations are trending **HERE**

Travel & Cruise Weekly

A very French gathering



ATOUT France hosted five tour operators at the Destination Montagnes trade show last week in Chambéry, where they had the opportunity to meet with French suppliers from mountains, ski and snow tourism.

Over two days, 438 tour operators from 59 countries gathered to learn about the diverse tourist offerings in the French mountain ranges, which attracted 10 million visitors during the 2022/23 winter.

The delegation also enjoyed pre-show famils in Meribel and Val Thorens, as well as a post-tour in Val-d'Isere. *JM*

Pictured: Jason Grondman, Mogul; Mason Collins, Sno'n'ski; Clelie Collas, Atout France; Jennifer Moss, Snowcapped Tours; and Joshua Wolfe, Skimax.

AKL rise continues

PASSENGER volumes passing through Auckland Airport climbed 18% year-on-year in Nov, the latest operational stats from the gateway detail.

International again saw the biggest growth, with numbers 31% up on the prior year, while domestic saw a modest 7% jump.

This was largely driven by a near-doubling in travellers heading to Asia, which saw a strong boost on services to China, Hong Kong and Japan.

Six airlines serving Auckland from North America and Canada have led this market to return in full to pre-pandemic levels, with 104,000 heading to or from the USA and Canada.

Auckland's pandemic recovery is now at 87% compared to Nov 2018, with total pax numbers hitting 1,579,874 for the month.

UA Boeings back

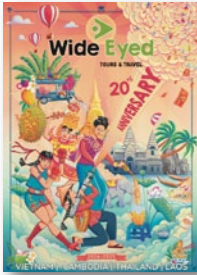
UNITED Airlines has restored its fleet of Boeing 787 MAX 9 aircraft to service after subjecting each to a thorough safety inspection.

The move was made in response to growing concern among flyers toward Boeing aircraft following Alaska Airlines' high-profile door blowout earlier this month.

United Chief Executive Scott Kirby praised his front line staff for working hard to assist customers while the 79 aircraft were rigorously checked in coordination with America's FAA.

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Wide Eyed Tours - The Wide Eyed Ultimate Guide
Wide Eyed Tours & Travel has released its latest brochure along with a new sales kit. Expect to see a sample itineraries that are fully customisable and cover a number of popular destinations in Vietnam, Cambodia, Thailand and Laos, including new off-the-beaten-track locations. For example, travellers can opt for the 10-day 'Best of Vietnam' tour, which includes an overnight Ha Long Bay cruise, visits to ancient temples, tombs and citadels, a chance to experience Saigon's vibrant nightlife, and an exploration of the Cu Chi Tunnels.



Viva Holidays - Western Australia 2024/25
Viva Holidays has released its 2024/25 Western Australia brochure, featuring a wide range of the tour operator's signature accommodation and touring options, from the Margaret River and Perth, to the Coral Coast and The Kimberley region. Travellers can discover a selection of sailings aboard the *True North II*, scenic seaplane flights over the city of Perth and Rottnest Island, as well as the new seven-day Ultimate Perth &

Margaret River Gourmet Getaway.



Wendy Wu Tours - Christmas Collection 2024/25
Get ready for Christmas early this year, with Wendy Wu Tours' new Christmas Collection brochure for the 2024/25 holiday season. The 11-page guide is short but sweet, showcasing a vast range of itineraries across Japan, Vietnam, China, India, and more. Travellers will get to enjoy end-of-year festivities in their favourite destinations, as well as unforgettable experiences such as walking China's Great Wall on Christmas Day.



Adventure Associates - Ethiopia
Adventure Associates is inviting travellers to explore the ancient Abyssinia in Ethiopia, with a 27-day journey which can be split into two separate tours. The 16-day Diverse South tour will take travellers to various heritage sites including the Awash National Park, Arba Minch, and more. During the second part of the journey, guests will visit iconic landmarks such as the Royal Castles of Gondar and the Church of St George.