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## Today's issue of TD

**Travel Daily** today features a cover wrap from **Silversea**, eight pages of news, including our **Sustainability** page plus a product profile from **Inspiring Vacations** and a full page from **CLIA Memberships**.

## FCM appoints SVP

**FLIGHT** Centre Travel Group business specialist FCM Travel has promoted Michelle Jolley (pictured) as its new Senior Vice President of Global Marketing. Jolley will oversee marketing efforts for the brand across 90 countries and brings experience working in several regions including South Africa and the US. She will report to FCTG Global Corporate CMO, Scott Alboni. At the same time, FCM has named Gina Ng as its new VP of Marketing for the Americas.



## ATIA seeks compo fair go

**AUSTRALIAN** travel agents have been fined over 600,000 times in the past two years by airlines through Agent Debit Memos (ADMs), with ATIA calling for the government to legislate a fairer go for agents and travellers.

Addressing a parliamentary hearing for the 'Pay on Delay' bill tabled by Victorian Senator Bridget McKenzie and Western Australia Senator Dean Smith, ATIA CEO Dean Long took aim at disproportionate treatment of agents by airlines.

The revelation was met with shock by Senator McKenzie and Committee Chair Senator Glenn Sterle, who expressed dismay with the earlier testimony by Qantas and Virgin rallying against a mandatory compensation scheme on cancelled or delayed flights.

"In a majority of those

instances, the ADM fee would be more than what the agent would earn in a commission," Long said.

"For ATIA, we continue to see evidence that further reform is needed to ensure that the aviation industry works for travellers, agents, TMCs, tour operators, airlines and airports."

Long said travel agents play an essential role in supporting consumers but are often the first ones penalised for systemic issues and inconsistencies in policies.

"Airlines set the terms and conditions for fares and have the ability to take over and amend bookings at any time, yet even as part of this hearing, claims to the contrary were made by airline representatives," he explained.

The Pay on Delay bill seeks to formalise minimum compensation levels for travellers affected by delays or cancellations, with airlines arguing existing Australian Consumer Law is sufficient.

Also addressing the committee was consumer advocate Adam Glezer, who shot down claims by Qantas and Virgin Australia that a mandated compensation scheme would result in higher airfares.

Referring to controlled data from 2022, Glezer said the estimated cost of compensation per passenger across the EU and UK to an airline was between 60 cents and \$1.20.

"There's absolutely no evidence that it would lead to a price rise of any note to consumers." ML

## Silversea's moment

**TRAVELLERS** are invited to seize the moment and find a new version of themselves onboard a Silversea voyage, discovering the undiscovered, disconnecting and celebrating everything about life. More details on the **cover page**.

## Become a specialist

**CLIA** Australasia is inviting new and experienced agents to boost their cruise knowledge and selling skills by becoming a CLIA-trusted advisor - details on **page nine**.



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## Airports have hands in travellers' pockets

EXCLUSIVE

**AVIATION** lobby group Airlines For Australia and New Zealand (A4ANZ) is calling for government regulation of four major Australian airports in the wake of an ACCC report showing significant profits were made over the 2023-24 financial year.

In response to the competition watchdog's *Airport Monitoring Report 2023-24* (**TD** yesterday), A4ANZ said airports in Australia have no incentive to act in anyone else's interest.

"Airports have their hands in passengers' pockets from the moment they enter airport property - including for rental cars, taxi and rideshare surcharges, and in particular car parking," said A4ANZ Chairman, Professor Graeme Samuel.

"The most recent ACCC data showed the four major airports reported profit margins above 60% for the second year in a

row for car parking - these are super profits, well above those recorded by airlines, banks, or supermarkets," Samuel added.

A4ANZ acknowledged an ACCC finding that airports had resumed investing in new facilities and services following the pandemic, but said greater transparency and scrutiny are still needed to ensure capital expenditure is useful and not "inefficient gold-plated infrastructure".

Future investment outlined in the report includes a \$5 billion transformation in Brisbane ahead of the 2032 Olympic Games; an overhaul of Terminal 2 in Sydney and the opening of Western Sydney Int'l Airport; a third runway in Melbourne; and a new terminal and runway in Perth.

"The Aviation White Paper recommended enhanced monitoring of Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Perth and Western Sydney airports.

"We don't consider that monitoring alone can be effective in constraining monopoly airports from extracting every available dollar from airline passengers.

"As the ACCC have stated, without appropriate regulation, an airport can exercise its market power to earn monopoly profit to the detriment of airport users and the broader Australian economy," Samuels said.

Meanwhile, the Australian Airports Association (AAA) cited ongoing high passenger satisfaction levels based on an extensive survey process.

AAA CEO Simon Westaway said the results were pleasing, considering the strong rebound in passenger traffic in line with major construction activity.

"Total air passenger numbers at Australian airports are expected to reach 210,000 by 2030, a more than 30% increase on existing levels," Westaway said. *ML*

## Cheers to 30 years



**BUNNIK** Tours celebrated its 30th anniversary over the weekend, marking three decades since Marion, Sacha and Dennis Bunnik (**pictured**) jointly launched the travel business, which last month unveiled a brand refresh (**TD** 04 Feb).

"Congratulations to the Bunnik family on building a travel brand that's not only defied the odds but has continued to grow, thrive and connect likeminded travellers with authentic, unforgettable destinations for three decades," the company shared on LinkedIn.

## An Inspiring journey

**INSPIRING** Vacations is highlighting its 22-day small group tour through the Five Stans of Central Asia - see **page 10**.

## SCENIC ECLIPSE

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Tuesday 18th Mar 2025

## Millennials lead at sea

**THE** cruise industry is undergoing a period of significant demographic diversification, with passengers aged between 25 and 44 now the largest segment of bookers in the US at 45%.

The finding was contained in a report from comparison company Cruisebound, which also showed older travellers (55 plus) represent a much smaller part of the total than years gone by, accounting for just over a quarter of bookings.

A trend that has also been noted here in Australia, the data revealed Gen Z travellers are taking to cruises in greater numbers, driven by a desire for unique travel experiences.

To cater to this, the report said cruise lines have been actively crafting voyages that appeal to younger guests, including through shorter sailings with more immersive itineraries.

High-energy entertainment,



adrenaline-pumping attractions, and family-friendly amenities have also increased in line with a stronger take-up from the younger generations.

The findings revealed the trend towards online bookings has continued, with 69% digital bookings in 2024, growing from 65% in 2020.

Interestingly, the share of cruise travel booked online is increasing across all age groups, with the biggest growth seen in the 45 and above demographic. *AB*

## Agents uncover more Ponant



**PONANT** has hosted the first wave of its new event series in partnership with Paul Gauguin Cruises across Canberra, Melbourne, and Sydney.

So far, the Discovery Sessions have welcomed around 800 attendees, including 60 trade partners, while the return to Canberra for the first time since the pandemic saw a turnout of nearly 100 guests.

A key moment of the sessions was the announcement of the Paul Gauguin Flight Credit offer, alongside a new pre- and post-cruise program in Japan.

Guests took advantage of exclusive event-only offers, with French Polynesia, Japan, the

Kimberley and the Arctic and Antarctica among the most in-demand destinations.

Additionally, a Paul Gauguin Polynesian performance entertained attendees through traditional dance and music, while a Paul Gauguin-branded ice cream cart was a hit in Sydney and Melbourne, with plans to visit Brisbane as well.

Registrations are still open **HERE** for the Brisbane and Newcastle events, which will take place on 20 and 26 Mar respectively, completing a total of seven event sessions.

The second wave of Discovery Sessions, which will include New Zealand, will occur in Jun. *JM*

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## Collette prepared to go slow in Oz

### EXCLUSIVE

**ONE** of the primary goals for Collette is to reduce the amount of mileage its guests spend on the coach and increase the time immersed in destination, the company's Executive Vice President of Global Sales, Christian Leibl-Cote has revealed.

Speaking with *Travel Daily* while on a recent trip to Australia, Leibl-Cote said his team is challenged every year to decrease the bus mileage time, because its customers routinely state they want more hours to explore.

One of the key platforms to achieve this on behalf of Australian travellers is to continue its focus on slow travel.

"There is no doubt that slower is better," Leibl-Cote explained.

"That goes for our guests everywhere but Australian travellers are ahead of the curve.

"We're starting to see the same thing with Canadians and Americans who are also valuing the slower pace a lot more.

"You will see with a lot of our competitors' itineraries list a lot of one-night stays...but our guests don't want to spend 10 hours going from Edinburgh to London.

"What the traveller wants is to spend time experiencing the culture and getting to know the destination so they can walk away with stories they can tell their friends about," he added.

Collette's small group Explorations tours have been a major focus for the operator in



recent years, with the mode of travel particularly successful with guests Down Under.

Globally, the touring range has enjoyed triple-digit growth compared to volumes sold in 2019, but Leibl-Cote confirmed even stronger numbers out of Australia have outperformed all other markets.

"It's been tremendous... Australia has really embraced our small group tours and that continues a trend around the world since we introduced the range in 2011."

The Collette exec also poured

praise on travel agents, citing an increased investment in close-to 24/7 call centres and resources as vindication of their value, with 94% of bookings now coming through the trade in Australia.

Currently, Japan is the number one destination for Australians. AB

## NTL appoints CEO

**LINC** Horton has been announced as Newcastle Airport's new Chief Executive, set to steer the facility's growth, as it prepares for the opening of its international terminal.

Horton brings experience in the airport sector to the role, which he will start next month.

He served as Melbourne Airport's Chief of Property from 2008-2020, where he oversaw the development of its estate.

The last two-and-a-half years also saw Horton serve as Toll Group's Global Head of Property since Dec 2022.

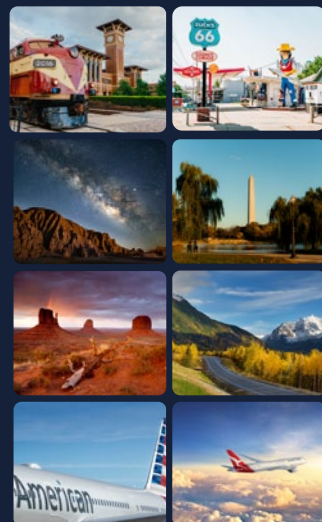
## 25hrs Jakarta opens

**NEW** Indonesian hotel 25hrs Hotel Jakarta The Oddbird is gearing up for its grand opening on 25 Apr (**TD** 27 Nov 2024).

Featuring an array of vibrant communal spaces and dining venues, the experiential hotel aims to connect guests to the city's environment and culture.

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## AW & LTC ink museum deal

### EXCLUSIVE

**ADVENTURE** World and the Luxury Travel Collection (LTC) are now offering travellers a complimentary annual membership to a natural history museum of their choice, inspiring lifelong learning and exclusive experiences.

The announcement was made during LTC's Product Showcase in Brisbane on the weekend.

"In essence, the offering transcends the conventional boundaries of luxury travel," Adventure World Managing Director Neil Rodgers (**pictured**) told *Travel Daily*.

"It is a sophisticated proposition that acknowledges the discerning traveller's pursuit of intellectual stimulation and exclusive experiences. It's not just about seeing the world, it's about understanding it."

From access to curated exhibitions, expert lectures and behind-the-scenes tours, these ongoing memberships are "a subtle, yet powerful, signal of status, a recognition of cultural



appreciation".

Museums in every state and territory across Australia and New Zealand are involved in the new benefit, from the Australian Museum in Sydney to MONA in Tasmania and the Tamaki Ponga Hira Auckland Museum.

The well-educated luxury traveller is no longer simply looking for amenities on their holidays, but meaningful experiences that involve actively engaging within the world, explained Rodgers.

Exclusivity is key to the ideal luxury travel experience, added Shannon Fogarty, Global Director of Product at LTC (**pictured**).

"In a world saturated with tourist traps, the promise of curated experiences is paramount. A museum membership delivers precisely that - offering access beyond the typical tourist itinerary," she said. *JHM*

## SQ up in the clouds

**SINGAPORE** Airlines will work with tech solution provider Salesforce to integrate new AI-powered service tools into its customer touch points.

As part of the collaboration, SQ will implement AgentForce, which utilises autonomous agents to complete specific tasks, allowing human agents to focus on more complicated customer requests.

Another program, Einstein in Service Cloud, will allow customer service staff to more easily catch up on customers' previous interactions with the airline.

"Together, we will co-create AI solutions that drive meaningful and impactful change and set new standards for service excellence in the airline industry," said Singapore Airlines CEO Goh Choon Phong.



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## Didgigo goes AI

**AUSTRALIAN-BASED** software provider for the travel industry, Didgigo, has announced a partnership with TourConnect AI, a provider of AI-generated itineraries and booking automation tools for DMCs and tour operators.

The partnership will be implemented in two phases with the first encompassing the utilisation of TourConnect's AI automation in the backend of the Didgigo platform, becoming part of Didgigo's new 'Document X' product and available this month.

Phase two will see users gain the ability to turn AI-generated itineraries into visual travel documents with client branding.

"Our goal is to enable DMCs to deliver custom itineraries at scale and with greater personalisation - this partnership takes us another step forward," Mike Herrmann, President and CEO, TourConnect AI, said. *DF*

## Boeing safety boss

**BOEING** has announced Don Ruhmann as its Chief Aerospace Safety Officer, taking over from Mike Delaney, who is retiring after 40 years with the company.

Ruhmann has worked with Boeing for several years, where he has had extensive experience leading major projects such as the 777 and 787 programs.

In his new role, Ruhmann will support Boeing's Global Aerospace Safety Program.



## Window Seat

**TA-DA!** A man at New Jersey airport surprised a security officer when he pulled out a live turtle from his pants.

He was escorted away by Port Authority police, while animal control and the US Fish and Wildlife Service were contacted.

"I believe this is the first time we have come across someone who was concealing a live animal down the front of his pants," Thomas Carter, the TSA's federal security director for New Jersey.

"As best as we could tell, the turtle was not harmed by the man's actions."



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## ATEC urges political support

**SUPPORT** for the tourism export industry from both major political parties has been urged in the lead up to the federal election by the Australian Tourism Export Council (ATEC) with the release of its 2025 Policy Pillars.

The five pillars highlight key industry-driven priorities that ATEC Managing Director Peter Shelley said were shaped by industry feedback and reflected the needs of the industry which is still "struggling with workforce shortages, high operating costs, and challenges in re-engaging international markets".

The pillars include strengthening air access; addressing barriers in labour and skills development; building distribution chains to drive demand; increasing industry capability, efficiency and competitiveness; as well as removing barriers in Australia's tourism visa system.

"Tourism delivers jobs and economic growth across every part of the country, from major cities to the most remote regional communities, and ATEC is calling on both parties to acknowledge the industry's vital contribution and commit to policies that will drive recovery, create opportunity, and secure Australia's place as a world-leading tourism destination," Shelley said.

"The next Federal Government must back tourism with targeted support to strengthen aviation, invest in marketing, rebuild distribution channels, and enhance workforce development."

Shelley suggested that without the required support, the industry risks losing the "hard-won gains" in reconnecting with key international markets as well as rebuilding the workforce after the pandemic.

Tourism exports are the value of spending on Australian goods and services by international visitors.

According to the National Tourism Satellite Account (NTSA)



from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), the value of tourism exports was \$38.3 billion in 2023–24.

This represented a 48% or \$12.4 billion increase on 2022-23 and is 1.7% or \$0.6 billion higher than the \$37.7 billion of exports in 2018-19.

According to a report from Tourism Research Australia, "Tourism spend is forecast to increase by 31% over the next 5 years, to reach 61% above its pre-pandemic level.

"International visitation and domestic visitor nights are expected to rise to above their pre-pandemic levels." *DF*

### CX Aria Australia

**CATHAY** Pacific's highly anticipated Aria Suites (pictured) will take business class to new heights in Australia, with the airline set to launch the product Down Under.

Aria Suites are available aboard Cathay's Boeing 777-300ER, with Australia the first market outside of Hong Kong on which the product will be rolled out.

It is currently available on select CX SYD-HKG services.



## ATIA UPDATE

from Dean Long, CEO



**I WAS** back at Parliament House yesterday, where airline competition continues to be the focus of the 47th parliament.

Senate Inquiries are interesting places.

You always have government and opposition representation so are guaranteed to have competing views.

Senators jump on and off as parliamentary duties overlap with their commitments to their constituents.

It is a hive of activity - where Senators have limited time and many questions that they want you to answer.

When you add an upcoming election, those who are asking the questions are also seeking to create political advantage and the political crossfire can be brutal.

While all of this is true, as an association executive, the opportunity to address our national parliament and put forward the views of ATIA members is one that I cherish.

Over the last few years, I have found that almost every member

of parliament and senator knows one of our members.

They value the role they have in their community in either supporting local community events and sporting teams, and in some instances they have a family member working for our members.

It is our independent small- and medium-sized agents and tour operators who are appreciated as really serving the communities in which they operate.

While the role that we have in our community is respected and understood, there is no doubt that our elected representatives do not fully appreciate the pressures we face.

Improving this understanding is a continual focus of ours.

In yesterday's hearing, I spoke to the fact that in 2023 and 2024 over 600,000 ADMs were levied against ATIA members.

In a majority of those instances, the ADM fee would be more than what the agent would earn in a commission.

For ATIA, we continue to see evidence that further reform is needed to ensure that the aviation industry works for travellers, agents, TMCs, tour operators, airlines and airports.

### Escape now on Tue

**NEWS** Corp's *Escape* title is expanding, and is now available every Tue as well as Sun.

Flight Centre is on board as the launch partner for 'Travel Tuesday with *Escape*', with the expansion owing to growing consumer demand for travel content, particularly targeting early week booking trends.

Available in print and digitally, the newly weekly issue will feature practical advice, partner deals and information to encourage immediate holiday bookings.

### FAAA pay raise

**A NEW** agreement between the Flight Attendants Association of Australia (FAAA) and three labour hire companies has secured a more than \$20k pay rise for its members.

Cabin crew employed by Qantas Domestic, Maurice Alexander Management, and Altara labour hire companies will now earn the same pay as their colleagues employed directly by Qantas.

The first pay raises are set to kick in with an uplift in allowances starting from next month.





### Data partnership

**GLOBAL** travel intelligence platform Mabrian and The Data Appeal Company have partnered with the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) to push data-driven growth, to help foster a more sustainable and resilient tourism industry.

Both companies will give WTTC access to their comprehensive travel intelligence databases, offering in-depth data analysis and insights on key industry trends, such as air connectivity, traveller sentiment and interests, demand profiling, accommodation supply, and event impact analysis.

These insights will support WTTC's industry research initiatives, policy development, and thought leadership efforts, contributing to its mission of fostering informed decision-making within the global travel ecosystem.

WTTC SVP Advocacy & Comms Virginia Messina said these insights are key to sustainable tourism growth.

"We are delighted to welcome Mabrian as a knowledge partner, and look forward to leveraging their expertise, as well as The Data Appeal Company's, to enhance our research and advocacy efforts."

## PRO-INVEST FIRST IN AUS TO CERTIFY

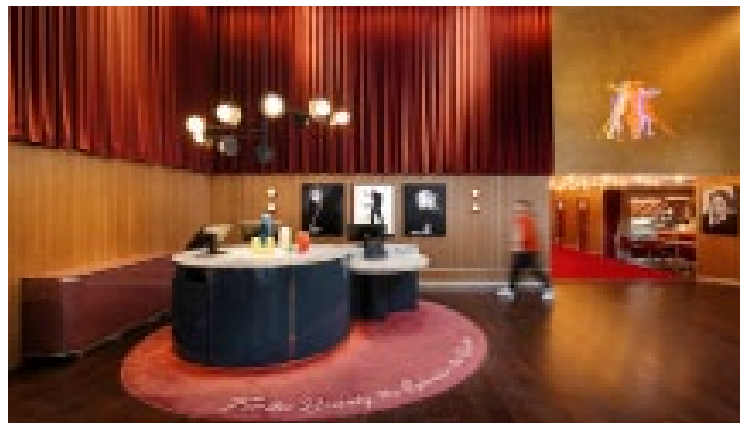
**PRO-INVEST** Hotels has become the first company in Australia to receive Green Key Certification - the globally recognised eco-label designed specifically for hotels.

Nine properties under Pro-Invest's management have received the certification, with the most recent being Hotel Indigo Sydney Potts Point, an IHG Hotel (pictured).

The portfolio will soon be joined by the Kimpton Margot Sydney; The Sebel Canberra Campbell; and Hotel Indigo Melbourne on Flinders, an IHG Hotel, which will bring Pro-Invest's total number of certified properties to 12.

The company aims to have 15 hotels across the region certified by year's end.

A Green Key is awarded to hotels that put active efforts into reducing their environmental



footprint; advancing social impact through a rigorous framework; and demonstrating environmental responsibility and stewardship.

The certification is based on a comprehensive set of criteria, including energy conservation, water management, waste reduction, sustainable sourcing, and promoting environmental education for guests and staff.

It is awarded only to hotels that consistently meet these high standards, ensuring they are leaders in sustainable hospitality.

"Pro-Invest is committed to achieving third-party certification that holds us accountable and pushes our hotels to continuously improve their operations in terms of sustainability," Pro-Invest Deputy Chair Jans Smits said. *MS*

### Sofitel supports sustainable fashion

**SOFITEL** Sydney Darling Harbour recently supported sustainable fashion, with a "trashion show" (pictured).

The one-of-a-kind event saw ocean waste transformed into high-fashion statements, at the 'Marine Debris Trashion Show - Beach Couture: A Haute Mess' on the weekend.

The show was curated by Sydney-based "artist" Marina DeBris, with one of the highlights being the finale piece



- a gown crafted entirely from discarded face masks.

A curated selection of DeBris' designs will be showcased in Sofitel Darling Harbour's entrance from now until the end of the month.

### Marriott eats up

**MARRIOTT** International's The Luxury Collection is enhancing the future of culinary sustainability through its global partnership with MAD Academy.

The programs focus on empowering chefs with experience and insights with the intent of bolstering sustainability efforts.

This will include prioritising local sourcing, reducing food waste, and more.

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## MONEY

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

**AU\$1 = US\$0.638**

**WALL** Street is in calamity with a stock fire sale periodically flaring up based on whatever snap decision is next to come from the White House.

Despite this, some currencies and commodities are climbing to new record highs including gold and the Canadian dollar.

The latter comes as new Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney is sworn in and immediately goes on tour to meet King Charles and shore up the country's eagerness to collaborate with global allies.

*Wholesale rates this morning.*

US	\$0.638
UK	£0.491
NZ	\$1.096
Euro	€0.584
Japan	¥95.33
Thailand	฿21.44
China	¥4.616
South Africa	11.559
Canada	\$0.912
Crude oil	US\$67.34

## Crystal's new offer

**TRAVELLERS** can secure significant savings on their next Crystal cruise, thanks to the brand's new season offer.

Those who book select voyages throughout 2025, 2026 and 2027 before 30 Apr will get a \$6,000 discount per suite, as well on board credit of US\$500.

For more information on the offer, **CLICK HERE**.

## St. Paddy's Down Under



**TOURISM** Ireland has unveiled its program of St Patrick's Week promotions, with the annual celebration attracting more than 100,000 overseas visitors to the country each year.

In Australia, the DMO went live

yesterday with a 'Fill Your Heart with Ireland' consumer marketing campaign, which will run until the end of Apr, with a second round of activity planned for the later half of the year.

The campaign aims to build on the success of the 2024 iteration, and will run across social channels as well as YouTube, Netflix, and Spotify.

Tourism Ireland has also released a new video wishing the world a Happy St Patrick's Day, featuring footage of the destination's landscapes as well as the festivities happening around the island.

"St Patrick's Day provides a unique opportunity to showcase the very best of Ireland to the world," Tourism Ireland CEO Alice Mansergh said.

"Promotion of all we offer visitors at this time of year leads to the highest level of online research for 'holidays to Ireland' annually, so the spotlight for Ireland created during St Patrick's Week tees up spring and summer travel ahead." JM

See the campaign video **HERE**.

## Don't overlook us

**DESTINATION** Southern Highlands has launched its first tourism campaign video in four years, targeting travellers from Sydney and Canberra.

Under the banner 'Closer than you think', the initiative reminds visitors that the Southern Highlands is only a 90-minute drive from either capital, positioning it as "a dream escape close to home".

Created in partnership with Sydney-based experiential agency BBR Group Australia, the video highlights the region's natural beauty, cultural depth, and year-round appeal, particularly its seven national parks, award-winning vineyards, truffle forests, thriving arts scene, and more.

Watch the clip **HERE**.

## Undercover PTMs

**TRAVELMANAGERS** has selected a group of 10 personal travel managers (PTMs) to participate in Signature Travel Network's mystery shopping program throughout 2025.

Each incognito agent will complete a two-night stay at one of Signature's luxury hotels and resorts, where they will assess every aspect of the guest experience, before revealing their true identity upon checkout.

This will mark the third consecutive year that TravelManagers' Operations Manager, Troy Coelho, has been entrusted to pick a new group of undercover agents.

## Sunny days ahead for My Cruises

**FLIGHT** Centre Travel Group's My Cruises has been named as the official Coaches Partner of the Gold Coast Suns AFL team.

The collaboration will help reinforce My Cruises' presence in its home city, with its branding to feature prominently on the team, including polos and signage in the coach's box on matchdays.

The agency will also run giveaways for Suns members and fans throughout the season, with chances to win Royal Caribbean cruises, as well as exclusive offers for members.

To celebrate the partnership, My Cruises has launched a competition offering footy fans the chance to win a seven-day South Pacific cruise with Royal Caribbean, valued at \$7,500.

My Cruises will give every entrant a \$200 gift voucher to put towards their next cruise holiday.



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