

## McNamara wake off

**THE** celebration of the life of Bill McNamara (**TD** 17 Mar), planned for today at Bar Reggio in Sydney, will be postponed "until the world is back to normality".

However his funeral took place as originally scheduled, at 10.30am today at Sacred Heart Catholic Church in Darlinghurst, NSW.

## Singapore closes to transit passengers

**AUTHORITIES** in Singapore have announced the closure of the country to all short-term visitors from anywhere in the world, including transit passengers.

The ban, which effectively eliminates Singapore as a transit hub for Australians attempting to return from Europe, is in place from midnight tonight.

## GC parks shutdown

**ARDENT** Leisure has announced the temporary closure of its Dreamworld and WhiteWater World theme parks on the Gold Coast due to the new measures regarding social distancing.

The closures are effective immediately, with Ardent providing assurance it had not been notified of any confirmed cases of COVID-19 at its properties.

"We look forward to welcoming our valued guests and passholders back very soon," the company said.

## "Calm and confident" - WWT

### EXCLUSIVE

**WENDY** Wu Tours (WWT) founder Wendy Wu says although Australia is currently in the grip of the coronavirus crisis, she is "very calm and very confident" that the market will recover.

Speaking to **Travel Daily** in Sydney on Fri, Wu cited the progression of COVID-19 in China, where after strict measures, the outbreak is now contained.

Japan has also seen its COVID-19 cases peak and now decline, without having to close borders or take drastic measures.

"I know the Chinese market, and I know it will return," she said, with WWT continuing to receive China and Japan bookings in Jan and Feb despite ongoing publicity about the coronavirus situation.

However now that demand has plummeted due to government actions directly impacting the travel industry, she said it was time to rise up.

"So far we are the ones affected, more than any other industry.

"Usually we are quiet, happy and supportive and don't make a fuss - this time we must speak out and ask for help," Wu urged.

While the industry is shut down, she urged travel consultants

to continue to feed the travel dreams of their customers.

"The travel bug will not go away - be a source of inspiration and when confidence returns your clients will come and book."

She suggested agents could also take the opportunity to build their knowledge and expertise.

Wendy Wu Tours is continuing to expand its product range, with the addition of South America last year complemented by the rollout of new itineraries in Central Asia - including Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan - which Wu believes will be an emerging area once the travel rebound occurs.

"We will be like a phoenix, we will come out flying as destination specialist experts," she said.

"Be ready for the bounce," she enthused to the travel industry.

Wu, who yesterday flew out on one of the final flights from Australia to China, last week served drinks to her team to celebrate the successful repatriation of all WWT pax - see [traveldaily.com.au/videos](http://traveldaily.com.au/videos).

## Bestjet update

**ON 07 Jan 2019**, **Travel Daily** published an article "James' Bestjet 'heartbreak'", reporting on the collapse of the online travel agency Bestjet.

The story included unsubstantiated allegations by the previous owner (Rachel James) including statements that the new owner Robert McVicker Junior had failed to make payment due under the business sale contract, and that Robert McVicker was guilty of poor management losing millions per day causing the failure of the business in just 39 days.

**Travel Daily** now accepts that the article was unjustified and reflected poorly on McVicker International and Robert McVicker.

**Travel Daily** further accepts that all of the allegations made against McVicker International and Robert McVicker were unsubstantiated and apologises unreservedly for any embarrassment or distress that may have been caused to Robert McVicker Junior or his family by publishing the unsubstantiated claims of Rachel James.

### Today's issue of TD

**Travel Daily** today has four pages of news and photos, and full pages from:

- AA Appointments



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Having trouble choosing between Phuket and Koh Samui? See the differences in the March issue of *travelBulletin*.

**CLICK to read**  
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## Re-COVID-ery latest

**THE** industry's first live online "Survive & Revive" session last Friday afternoon was also recorded, and is available for viewing on The Travel Industry Hub's Facebook page - **CLICK HERE**.

Mark Carter discussed "Finding Calm & A Path Amidst the Storm," with participants also engaging in a lively online discussion.

The sessions continue tomorrow at 11am, with Melissa Schembri from C&M Recruitment presenting on "Preparing for your next role: Your Personal Brand".

Her talk will cover CV writing, the use of LinkedIn, job applications and more, with prospective participants able to register for the Facebook Live event at [facebook.com/events/238120747343233](https://facebook.com/events/238120747343233).

Then on Wed 25 Mar at 11am Vara Glover will present on "Managing Your Mindset - Finding Resilience in the Face of Redundancy".

All sessions are FREE - more info at [thetravelindustryhub.com](https://thetravelindustryhub.com).

## AFTA pushing government

**THE** Australian Federation of Travel Agents (AFTA) is continuing to work with the government to "identify the acute and specific challenges" being faced by the industry, with travel agents the "person in the middle" of the turmoil as customers cancel.

AFTA CEO Jayson Westbury yesterday issued an update following the release of the government's latest stimulus package (**TD** breaking news), with a number of elements likely to be beneficial to AFTA members.

The enhanced "Boosting Cash Flow for Employers" payment will provide up to \$100,000 to eligible businesses, based on the tax they withhold for their employees, as an incentive to keep people in their jobs.

The Government will also provide a guarantee of 50% of any new business loans, up to \$250,000, with loans unsecured and no repayments required for six months, while red tape

is being cut via a temporary exemption from "responsible lending obligations" to SMEs.

Sole traders, whose businesses have no sales or limited income, can also apply for the JobSeeker allowance, which is a doubling of the former NewStart payment to over \$1,100 per fortnight.

Westbury said AFTA would "do all we can to decipher the package," with further details to be forthcoming on how members can get access to support.

## REX on the ground

**REGIONAL** Express will shut down its scheduled flights in all states except Qld, where the services are underwritten by the State Government.

Operations will cease effective 06 Apr "unless State and Federal Governments are unwilling to underwrite the losses," the carrier said, with passengers able to put bookings on credit for a future flight.



## Window Seat

**MAGGIE** Eddie from Helloworld Belconnen is one of the many travel consultants across Australia doing their best to keep their spirits up through the coronavirus crisis.

She's gone public with a spirited music video, performed in her office complete with funky dancing, disco lights and plenty of Glen-20, face masks and travel accessories.

The tune? Of course it's Gloria Gaynor's disco classic "*I Will Survive*" - check it out at [traveldaily.com.au/videos](https://traveldaily.com.au/videos).



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## HLO stands down 65%

**HELLOWORLD** Travel has today announced it will stand down 65% of its workforce, make 275 people redundant, implement reduced hours and cut all discretionary expenditure in an effort to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic (**TD** breaking news).

These measures, among others will significantly reduce Helloworld Travel's monthly outlays by approximately 80%.

Approximately 1,300 people, or 65% of the Helloworld Travel Group workforce will be stood down for in initial period of 10 weeks, starting from tomorrow at 5pm through to 31 May.

The company will make 275 people redundant in various countries, at an estimated cost of \$1.4 million.

All remaining personnel will with immediate effect, be offered reduced working hours and this will be further assessed in the weeks and months ahead.

Helloworld Travel has frozen membership and marketing fees for all network members for six months from Apr to end Sep.

All discretionary expenditure has ceased, along with marketing and advertising activity, and major project expenditure has been materially curtailed or put

on hold.

The CEO and Executive Director will also take no salary for the next 3.5 months and direct reports to the CEO will take a further 15% paycut, resulting in a total reduction of 40%.

Helloworld Travel said given the rapid de-escalation of international and now domestic travel, demand for its services had declined and it was very unlikely to show any signs of recovery in the next four to six months.

"We do not anticipate this changing until the rate of infection is declining in our region and elsewhere and a vaccine is either available or on its way with some degree of certainty," the company said.

## Experience Co halt

**EXPERIENCE** Co has suspended all of its operations indefinitely in response to Australian and NZ government advice with regards to non-essential services and social distancing.

This will be reviewed on a weekly basis.

Since Jan, Experience Co has reduced its debt by selling GBR Helicopters and accelerated cost saving initiatives flagged as part of a strategic review.

## BROCHURES

**WELCOME** to Brochures of the Week, *Travel Daily's* Monday feature. If your firm is releasing a new brochure you'd like to make the industry aware of, send a brief description summarising its features and itineraries, including a PDF of the front cover, and contact details to [brochures@traveldaily.com.au](mailto:brochures@traveldaily.com.au).



### Hurtigruten - Norway 2021/22

Hurtigruten's latest brochure showcases two ways to explore the Norwegian coast - the original coastal voyage and new Norway expeditions. The original coastal voyage collection offers a total of 34 ports, broken into six-, seven- or 12-day voyages while expeditions consist of 12- and 15-day cruises and long port stays that last from half a day to a full day. The program also features pre- and post-programs and excursions, detailed itineraries across the seasons and information on the line's ships, destinations and the onboard experience.

## THAI farewells "Events Queen"



**THAI'S** long-serving Executive Administrator and Senior Sales Executive NSW/ACT Denise Dalton has decided to retire after 33 years with the carrier.

She has decided to spend more time enjoying her return to good

health after a difficult year being treated for breast cancer.

THAI said it would miss Dalton's expertise in organising the many industry events over the years, earning her the well-deserved title of "Events Queen".

Dalton is **pictured** enjoying a farewell lunch last week in Sydney with industry friends and colleagues.

## State border moves

**WESTERN** Australia, the Northern Territory South Australia, and Queensland have moved to introduce strict border controls as Prime Minister Scott Morrison advises Australians against any non-essential travel.

Western Australia's measures will see most arrivals from interstate from 1:30pm tomorrow ordered to self-isolate for 14 days.

Some exemptions will include for flight crews and the state is investigating using Rottnest Island as a quarantine facility.

In the Northern Territory, all arrivals from 4pm tomorrow will have to self-isolate for 14 days and South Australia will establish 12 border crossings where travellers will be required to sign a declaration about their health and ability to undertake mandatory self-isolation for two weeks, beginning 4pm tomorrow.

Queensland also closed its shared border with the NT.

The move follows Tasmania, which on Thu announced all non-essential travellers arriving from midnight Fri would have to go into 14 days of quarantine.

**MEANWHILE**, the Federal Government has introduced measures which saw many public venues including pubs, casinos and cinemas closed at midday today, but hotels are allowed to continue operations in an accommodation capacity.



## NRL R2 WINNERS

Congratulations

**ALYCIA BRENNAN**

from Your Travel and Cruise

Alycia was the top point scorers for Round 2 of *Travel Daily's* NRL footy tipping competition. Having won a \$100 travel credit courtesy of Expedia.



Travel Daily NRL tipping competition is sponsored by Emirates, with the top tipper for the season winning flights to Europe.



NSW permit LTPS/19/31793 / ACT permit TP 19/02664



## Airlines suspend services

**GLOBAL** aviation links are rapidly contracting this week, with many major carriers cutting routes drastically or even ceasing flights altogether.

Singapore Airlines will cut 96% of its capacity that was originally scheduled up until the end of Apr, given the further tightening of border controls around the world over the last week.

The move will see around 138 Singapore Airlines and SilkAir aircraft grounded, out of a total fleet of 147 and Scoot will also suspend most of its network, grounding 47 of its fleet of 49.

Yesterday, Emirates confirmed a major wind-back (**TD** breaking news) but said it would continue to operate some passenger and cargo flights to Australia until further notice, as long as borders remain open.

Cathay Pacific will move to a bare-bones schedule which involves thrice weekly flights to just 12 global destinations, including Sydney, while South African Airways this morning announced the suspension of all international and regional flights

### QF to SMS pax

**QANTAS** has announced a change to procedures which will see all passengers sent a text message 24 hours prior to their scheduled departure, whether they booked directly with the carrier or via a travel agent.

The passenger will be given the option to either check-in or cancel their flight and place their ticket in credit.

QF said the measures aim to help agents mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on their businesses, by giving customers the ability to self-service.

For bookings made via a travel agent, if a customer chooses to cancel their flight, a Qantas Travel Credit Voucher will be generated and held by the agent, with no change fees and validity for travel for up to 12 months.

with immediate effect - including its non-stop Perth-Johannesburg services.

Fiji Airway has suspended all international flights until the end of May, with the exception of twice weekly Nadi-Singapore services, according to an update on Fri.

On the domestic front, the shutdown of Regional Express (see **p2**) has also been joined by the suspension of all Airnorth services out of Toowoomba until 28 Jun 2020 at this stage.

Virgin Australia this morning acknowledged new travel restrictions and interstate border closures, and said it "expects a material reduction in its domestic capacity as a result".

An update from Sydney Airport this morning said as a result of the global travel slowdown "we anticipate, and are planning for, a significant but temporary reduction in international and domestic traffic".

### Webjet still in halt

**A SHARE** trading halt requested by Webjet last week was extended this morning, with the company requesting a formal "suspension from official quotation".

Webjet is reportedly seeking as much as \$150 million to stay afloat, with today's *Financial Review* speculating that private equity firm KKR is in talks to take a significant stake in the firm.

The company's statement today said Webjet had not yet concluded the terms of a proposed capital raising, with the voluntary suspension to remain in place until it makes a further announcement.

### Olympics delayed?

**THE** International Olympic Committee is giving itself a four-week deadline to consider postponing the 2020 Summer Olympics in Tokyo, Japan.

## Industry still smiling!



**TRAVEL** agents spend their lives making people happy, so it's no wonder that despite the current world situation, many **Travel Daily** readers are still keeping their spirits up.

We have already had a huge response from the industry to last week's call for photos to encourage one another, while the team from Sanford International Travel showed their optimism in the **above** post on social media encouraging clients to continue their support.

The photo at **right** was sent in by Express Travel Group CEO Tom Manwaring, showing Tatyana Vanegas, owner of italktravel & cruise in Brighton, Vic who offered to assist the

Express Ticketing team with refunds.

"For the record, Taty actioned 52 refunds in swift time...team work at its best," Manwaring said.



**MEANWHILE** pictured **below** are the colourful team from Flight Centre Docklands staying positive!

Send your encouraging pics into [photos@traveldaily.com.au](mailto:photos@traveldaily.com.au).



Monday 23rd March 2020

## G Adv hits pause

**G ADVENTURES** has suspended all tours departing up to and including 31 May in response to COVID-19, with all bookings between those dates eligible for a 110% travel credit on land tours.

## CATO's crisis plan

**THE** Council of Australian Tour Operators (CATO) has developed a three-point action plan to support its members.

The major aspects of the plan include the sharing of information to assist with the immediate repatriation of clients currently travelling overseas, the provision of credits where possible to secure a future sales pipeline, and to work with industry associations and govt organisations to ensure the best possible outcomes.

"We need to take a unified approach and work together to ensure the survival of our industry so we are ready to help travellers with their plans when the timing is right," said CATO Managing Director Brett Jardine.

## Magnifica in strife?

**MORE** than 250 pax on board MSC Cruises' *MSC Magnifica* have reported upper respiratory illnesses and the ship has requested to dock at Fremantle, WA Premier Mark McGowan said.

McGowan said pax would not be allowed to disembark at that port and he was working with the Commonwealth to develop a plan.

## Ruby now at 48

**THE** number of passengers who have tested positive for COVID-19 after disembarking from *Ruby Princess* has soared to 48 cases.

In direct response, NSW Health has tightened up its disembarkation protocols, with all patients reporting respiratory issues on any ship arrival to be tested for COVID-19.

## FLT cancels dividend payment

**FLIGHT** Centre this morning requested a short-term suspension of trading in its shares, to give the company more time to finalise its strategies in response to the COVID-19 crisis.

The move follows a temporary trading halt requested late last week, as well as confirmation today the company was cancelling a \$40 million dividend payment to shareholders due next month.

CEO Graham Turner issued an open letter to the company's "People, Customers and Shareholders," saying the company was continuing to pursue options that will help preserve jobs for the long term, while engaging with the Government as well as landlords, suppliers, investors, vendors and

banks on ways to manage the financial impact of the precipitous drop in travel activity.

Turner thanked the company's "wonderful people throughout the world who have worked tirelessly to help the millions of travellers who have been affected by these never-before-seen and never imagined circumstances".

He said inevitable job losses were taking place "as a direct result of the restrictions that have led to the stoppage of the vast proportion of work that our people previously carried out".

FCTG's senior leadership team is giving up 50% of their salaries, with Turner saying Flight Centre was "ready to prosper when conditions eventually normalise".

# AFL

## AFL RI WINNER

Congratulations

## DONNA LEWIS

from Ansett

Donna was the top point scorers for Round 1 of *Travel Daily's* AFL footy tipping competition. Having won a \$100 travel credit courtesy of Expedia.

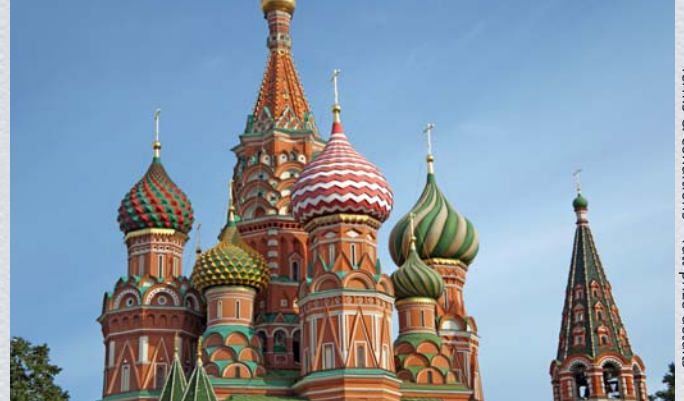
 **Expedia** **TAAP**

*Travel Daily* AFL tipping competition is sponsored by Emirates, with the top tipper for the season winning flights to Dubai.



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