



## Qantas funding

**QANTAS** this morning confirmed it had completed a new round of debt funding, with additional borrowings of \$1.05 billion "to strengthen its position as it manages through the coronavirus outbreak".

The 10-year loan, at an interest rate of 2.75%, has been secured against part of the Qantas Group's fleet of unencumbered aircraft, which were bought with cash in recent years.

QF said the funding increases its available cash to almost \$3 billion, with an additional \$1 billion undrawn facility remaining available.

CEO Alan Joyce said the airline was able to draw on the strength of its balance sheet in the current exceptional circumstances.

"Everything we're doing at the moment is focused on guaranteeing the long-term future of the national carrier, including making sure our people have jobs to return to when we have work for them again."

## TD summit is off

**THIS** year's *Travel Daily* Sustainability Summit, scheduled for 22 Apr, will not take place due to the government's restrictions on non-essential indoor gatherings.

Business Publishing Group General Manager Christian Schweitzer said the decision also impacted the *TD* Sustainability Awards, with the event now unfortunately deferred until 2021.

## No AFTA membership fees

**THE** Australian Federation of Travel Agents (AFTA) today announced it would not charge any membership fees for the next billing year, as one of several measures to support ATAS accredited agencies and the wider Australian travel sector.

The move was confirmed during a meeting of the AFTA Board yesterday, which also resolved to cancel the 2020 National Travel Industry Awards (*TD* breaking news) "given the current landscape and the increasing financial pressures on everyone".

Sponsors were informed of the NTIA cancellation late yesterday afternoon, with AFTA confirming it would make a full refund of all moneys paid so far in the next few weeks, including all sponsorship fees and any pre-purchased tickets.

Other responses to the COVID-19 crisis will see AFTA introduce "significant austerity measures" to reduce outgoings over the next six months, with the organisation to primarily focus on supporting the industry and "engaging with government to secure the necessary support, assistance and reforms".

AFTA's investment fund will be drawn down to fund critical

operational costs to support members, and ATAS accreditation will switch to a "monitor and support mode".

AFTA CEO Jayson Westbury said the "common sense decisions" would make a real difference, while ensuring AFTA was able to continue advocating for its members and their customers.

"We will get through this together, and with that in mind are planning a recovery party in Nov and an even bigger and better NTIA 2021," he said.

AFTA members will be contacted directly, with further information regarding financial reporting requirements and the membership fee waiver.

"AFTA remains committed to supporting members through these unprecedented times," Westbury concluded.

## ASTW resignations

**EXCLUSIVE**

**FIVE** of the 11 committee members of the Australian Society of Travel Writers (ASTW) resigned yesterday, including the President and Vice President, *TD* can exclusively reveal.

It's unclear at this stage why so many have stepped down, but outgoing President Helen Hayes confirmed her resignation along with Vice President, Aleney de Winter, Secretary Jeremy Bourke, writer representative Sue Preston and PR representative Mandy Dwyer.

## Virtual vacation!

**DESTINATION DC** is inspiring prospective travellers to the US capital to keep the dream alive by inviting them to take a "virtual vacation" showcasing key attractions including museums and landmarks in 360° online tours - [washington.org](http://washington.org).

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## Today's issue of TD

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

- Bench product profile

**VIKING**

*Like the legendary Vikings before us, we know that the best way to survive the storm ahead is together. So, today our message to you is one of unity. You are part of the Viking clan, and we will stand by you as we navigate these uncharted waters.*



A cruise in the Galapagos offers wildlife encounters like nowhere on earth. Read more in the March issue of *travelBulletin*.

**CLICK to read**  
**travelBulletin**

## Collette comments

**COLLETTE** Tours President, Jaclyn Liebl-Cote, has released a video explaining the operator's policies due to COVID-19 and the recent postponement of the Oberammergau Passion Play to 2022 (**TD** 20 Mar).

Affected customers can choose a voucher valued at 105% of total money received, valid for travel to 31 Dec 2021 on a tour and date of their choosing; the opportunity to transfer current reservations to a 2022 Oberammergau itinerary with a 5% rebate after travel.

Those who choose to cancel completely can also elect cash back, with Liebl-Cote also discussing commission policy and a \$50 bonus for agents whose clients transfer existing reservations to a new booking. See [gocollette.com](http://gocollette.com).



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## Virgin Australia shrinks

**VIRGIN** Australia Group has further shrunk its operations, reducing its domestic capacity to 90% and will stand down approximately 80% of its workforce (**TD** breaking news) following the escalation of state border closures across Australia.

Most of Virgin Australia Group's domestic flying will be suspended from midnight on 27 Mar until 14 Jun and Tigerair Australia domestic services have been suspended, effective immediately.

Approximately 8,000 of the group's 10,000 staff will be stood down until at least the end of May, with affected staff able to draw upon accrued leave entitlements, although the carrier noted for some, leave without pay would be inevitable.

The company is also commencing consultation on a proposal to close its New Zealand cabin crew and pilot base, and its Tigerair Australia Melbourne pilot base.

Virgin Australia CEO and MD Paul Scurrah said the carrier was facing what will be the biggest grounding of aircraft in this country's history.

The group will begin repositioning and grounding more than 125 aircraft from the end of the week.

"We plan to return Tigerair Australia and Virgin Australia to the skies as soon as it is viable to do so, however I am mindful

## Bunnik campaign

**BUNNIK** Tours has launched a new campaign called Still Dreaming, Still Bunnik Tours, designed to serve as inspiration for future travellers.

The campaign kicks off in Africa, highlighting the "Big Five" and the desert landscapes of Sossusvlei.

Each week a new destination will be revealed and the company will also crowd source on social media, asking what destinations the audience would like to see featured.

that how we operate today may look different when we get to the other side of this crisis," he said.

"My focus has been on guiding this company through the crisis, and at the same time ensure the business is set on a sustainable path when the recovery eventually comes."

The group will suspend services to 19 Australian destinations but maintain connectivity to 17 in order to transport essential services, critical freight & logistics.

The reduction is in addition to the group suspending international flying from 30 Mar to 14 Jun, and closing all VA-operated lounges across the network (**TD** 18 Mar).

The group has also reduced its cost base, including making further cuts to its domestic and short-haul businesses and pausing key supplier agreements.

Route by route details of the changes can be found **HERE**.

## Royal extension

**ROYAL** Caribbean Cruises (RCL) has extended the suspension of sailings across its brands until 12 May (**TD** breaking news).

The change affects sailings across Royal Caribbean International, Celebrity Cruises, Azamara and Silversea Cruises.

Due to port closures, RCL expects to return to service for Alaska, Canada and New England sailings on 01 Jul - more in **CW**.

## Meet Your Mediterranean Experts

### Zina

**Years in industry:** 20+

**Favourite Destination/s:** Italy

**Destinations Visited:** Italy, Greece, Croatia, Slovenia, Malta, Egypt, Spain & Switzerland.

**Expert Tip/s:** A huge part of your travel experience is experiencing authentic local cuisine. Nothing immerses you more in a culture than food. Venture out of the tourist area and eat like the locals do and experience an authentic, affordable meal.



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## Window Seat

**GLOBAL** restrictions on events have prompted some creative ideas about how to use major venues during COVID-19, such as Sydney's International Convention Centre which has repurposed its halls as a carpark to allow more social distancing.

However that's nothing compared to a rumour in the UK, where an online prankster suggested Wembley Stadium was set to be changed into a giant lasagne oven.

The 29-year-old wit, Billy McLean, claimed his sister's boyfriend's brother worked for the British Ministry of Defence.

"One of the things they're doing to prepare for COVID-19 is building a massive lasagne," he posted, with the stadium to be fitted with an underground heating system and the roof to be closed to keep the heat in.

"Then what they're going to do is lift it up with drones and cut off little portions and drop it off to people's houses."

Despite clearly being a joke, the UK Football Association was forced to issue an official denial.



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## ScoMo bans int'l travel

**PRIME** Minister Scott Morrison last night escalated the existing global Level 4 "Do not Travel" advisory for Australian citizens to an outright ban (**TD** breaking news), claiming some people are still departing on leisure trips despite the COVID-19 situation.

The move followed a National Cabinet meeting, during which attendees noted the new ban under the *Biosecurity Act 2015*. "This will help avoid travellers

returning to Australia with coronavirus, and the risks of spreading coronavirus to other countries," a formal statement from the meeting noted.

Exemptions, which will be managed by the Australian Border Force, will apply to a range of categories of travellers, including "for those citizens who are ordinarily resident overseas, where travel is essential or necessary, where travel is in our national interest, and on compassionate and humanitarian grounds".

## QF flying DRW-LHR

**QANTAS** is today and tomorrow operating non-stop Airbus A380 flights between Darwin and London Heathrow, with the closure of Singapore transits forcing the re-routing of QF1/2.

The temporary change makes the Darwin-London sector the longest to be operated commercially by an A380, at more than 17,150km.

The flight time from Darwin to London is 16 hours 45 minutes, while the return sector takes 17 hours and 50 minutes.

## Great Wall reopens

**PART** of the Great Wall of China has reopened to tourists, after the tourist attraction was closed for more than two months due to the COVID-19 outbreak.

The Badaling section of the wall, about 70km from Beijing, is now open daily between 9am and 4pm, with advance bookings required and a limit of 30% of the usual number of visitors to the area being imposed.

## Agents roll with the punches



**DESPERATE** times call for... unusual interactions.

**Travel Daily** readers have been going bonkers for some dunny paper, but it hasn't stopped them looking out for their colleagues.

TravelManagers Australia's Personal Travel Managers (PTMs) have been looking out for one another, with Luke Vaughan spotted getting ready to lob a couple of spare rolls through the window of fellow PTM John Lengacher (**pictured**).

**MEANWHILE**, the team at SevenOceans Cruising enjoyed some rare moments of levity last week, making the best of the COVID-19 situation with a Muck Up Day.

One of the highlights was the arrival of Therese Sunderland, who showed she was set to be really wrapped up in her work.

Staff didn't mention whether there was a subsequent frenzy from toilet paper-deprived employees ripping the precious stuff off her for later use.

Please keep sending in your photos and videos to help lighten up the industry, and anyone who has been put out of work can sign up for our **FREE** COVID-19 subscription to **Travel Daily**, which is now live at [subs.traveldaily.com.au](http://subs.traveldaily.com.au).

We'd also like to share recognition of suppliers or reps who have been particularly



helpful, or share feedback from a happy client - send it through to [info@traveldaily.com.au](mailto:info@traveldaily.com.au).

Also, with many readers working from home, share your snaps of you working alongside new colleagues (pets optional), or how you are keeping entertained in isolation - email [photos@traveldaily.com.au](mailto:photos@traveldaily.com.au).

## ACCOMMODATION

**WELCOME** to Accommodation Updates, *Travel Daily's* Wed feature. If your property has undergone some recent changes you would like to make the industry aware of, send a brief description with an image to [accomupdates@traveldaily.com.au](mailto:accomupdates@traveldaily.com.au).



**Amora Hotel Riverwalk Melbourne** has completed a \$5 million ground floor transformation across its public, dining and function spaces. The works saw the property fitted with a new reception, lobby, hotel bar, restaurant (The Reserve Restaurant), courtyard/courtyard bar, as well as exterior canopies, signage and lighting. The former marquee area has been transformed into an Events Pavilion featuring a green roof with a capacity for up to 350 people.



**The Sheraton Frankfurt Airport Hotel & Conference Center** has been divided to allow for a 779-room Sheraton hotel and a 233-room Marriott hotel. All rooms of the Sheraton have been refurbished and the hotel will soon offer a new Sheraton Club

Lounge. The new Frankfurt Airport Marriott Hotel has a residential aesthetic and its design draws upon Frankfurt's history of literature, the printing industry.

## Corowa lifted up by local



**ONE** Travellers Choice member shed a tear of happiness last week after a local community member reached out to show their support of her during these tough times.

Corowa Travel Link's Sue Wynne was at her desk when she was approached by one of the owners of a local caravan park, who gifted her a \$150 voucher for a meal at the nearby All Saints Estate.

"It was a beautiful gesture especially given they are not even current clients," Wynne said.

"They just wanted us to know that they care."

"I'm sitting here surrounded by wine, gin and chocolates from people who have stopped by to say 'we know you're doing it tough, keep your head up,'" Wynne added.

She also highlighted the support which had flowed from the Travellers Choice network.

"The corporate office team have been a godsend and the advice and encouragement other members are offering every day is just amazing," she said.

Wynne is **pictured** with her voucher.

## SAA suspension

**SOUTH** African Airways has suspended all its domestic flights from 27 Mar until 16 Apr, with South Africa entering a nationwide lockdown for 21 days.

This follows the airline's suspension of all intercontinental and Africa regional flights until 31 May (**TD** 23 Mar).

## Pax rev to plummet

**THE** International Air Transport Association (IATA) has updated its estimate on the revenue impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the global air transport industry.

It now anticipates that industry pax revenues could plummet \$252b or 44% below 2019's figure.

## Pausing TIME

**THE** Travel Industry Mentoring Experience (TIME) will pause its program for three months from 01 Apr to 30 Jun in response to the impact COVID-19 is having on the industry.

The graduation events set for Apr and Jun will be postponed, alongside the 10th anniversary scheduled for 10 Jun.

TIME is planning to return to full activity on 26 Aug, when the current mentees are due to graduate.

It is also expected a new TIME program intake will commence on that date.

In the meantime, the TIME board is working on a plan to bring together existing TIME mentors and past TIME graduates via an unofficial mentoring framework until 30 Jun.

## Olympics delayed

**THE** Int'l Olympic Committee (IOC) & Japanese Prime Minister Abe Shinzo have confirmed the Tokyo Olympic games must be rescheduled beyond 2020, but not later than summer 2021.

The decision is to safeguard the health of the athletes, everybody involved in the Olympic Games and the international community.

## Room for homeless

**HOMELESS** people in London are being given access to hotel rooms in which they can self-isolate under a trial initiated by Mayor of London Sadiq Khan.

The Mayor's team worked with Intercontinental Hotels Group (IHG) last week to block-book the rooms in two London hotels for the next 12 weeks.

## WIN A CRUISE TO RUSSIA



This month Viking is giving *Travel Daily* readers the opportunity to win a deluxe stateroom on the Waterways of the Tsars river cruise.

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