

Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today has five pages of news.

Xiamen Airlines boosts agent pay

CHINESE carrier Xiamen Airlines is bucking the commission reduction trend led by Qantas and American Airlines (TD 20 May) by actually increasing base BSP payments on tickets sold by Australian travel agents.

A notice to the industry this week confirmed that for tickets with point-of-sale in Australia and journeys originating here, the commission payment is now 5% on both the published fare and fuel surcharge, effective for any departures ticketed from 01 Jul.

Xiamen Airlines previously paid 3% base BSP commission.

Flight Centre MD Graham Turner recently told *Travel Daily* he expected post-pandemic long-haul airline competition would actually boost FCTG's yields.

Aeronology NDC Level 4

EXCLUSIVE

AUSTRALIAN travel technology firm Aeronology has become the first Asia-Pacific company to be formally certified by IATA as a "level 4 NDC aggregator".

The achievement is the latest step in Aeronology's vision to "help transform the way travel advisors do business on a global scale as the world emerges from the impact of COVID," Aeronology CEO Russell Carstensen said.

The formal certification sees Aeronology become one of just 24 companies globally to achieve NDC Level 4, with IATA confirming the company "uses Full Offer and Order management messages whose schemas are compliant with the standard NDC message schema version 18.1".

Carstensen told *Travel Daily* "this is an amazing achievement for a young travel tech business.

"This also means if any travel

business anywhere in the world who wants to have NDC as a direct IATA/airline connection, then we can provide it," he said.

"The beauty of our model...now means a travel agent - corporate, retail or wholesale - can have their own direct contracts with the NDC airline, and their own GDS contract, and transact all on one screen," Carstensen added.

Aeronology's platform is free from licence fees, with the company making money at the point of sale, which can be passed onto the client.

"This includes the original ticket, and all after-ticketing sales such as changes and reissues, and all operating on one screen, one mid office, one process and in conjunction with your own GDS system," the firm's CEO said.

Carstensen claimed the simple Aeronology platform means travel advisors can generate "at least triple" their current productivity.

Luxperience is off

THE Luxperience luxury trade show will not take place in its traditional hosted buyer format this year, with owner Diversified Communications saying it will instead "curate bespoke and relevant events tailored to the industry this year".

The company last year gathered the industry in a virtual format (TD 04 Jun 2020), but said the decision to defer the 2021 event followed "extensive conversations with various stakeholders exhibitors and buyers".

With the travel industry one of the most severely hit sectors of the pandemic, "the challenges ahead remain as we continue to navigate the unknown together," Diversified said.

The company is offering the Luxperience audience a \$100 discount to attend sister event, the Mumbrella Travel Marketing Summit, on 28 Oct in Sydney, by using the code TMSLUXP100 at mumbrella.com.au/travel.

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Window Seat

PERHAPS there is no person living on the planet who knows the thrill of skiing Thredbo more than the soon-to-be 100-year-old Frank Prihoda, Australia's oldest living Olympian.

Thredbo sat down with the great man this week to reminisce about the resort's early days and his life growing up in Australia.

Born in Prague in 1921, Prihoda travelled to Australia from Austria in 1950 to escape tough conditions in Europe, and knowing there was snow in Australia, he brought his skis along for the trip.

After skiing the slopes of Mt Buller for a few years, he later qualified for the 1956 Winter Olympics, representing Australia in the Slalom and Giant Slalom events.

In the 70s he moved to Thredbo, enjoying the slopes for close to 50 years.

"To me, Thredbo is very special in as much as I knew about it before it was born - I was good friends with [founder] Tony Sponar and I knew he had this dream & desire to found a ski resort," Prihoda recalled.



Ten AFTA board nominees

EXCLUSIVE

THERE are ten nominees for six positions on the Board of the Australian Federation of Travel Agents, which are up for election as part of the upcoming 44th AFTA Annual General Meeting.

The AFTA Constitution provides for half of the board to be re-elected each year, with nominees this year including six incumbent members along with four new aspirants.

Already on the board but up for re-election are Webjet's **Shelley Beasley**, Travellers Choice MD **Christian Hunter**, American Express Global Business Travel VP **Jo Sully**, Corporate Travel Management Chief Operating Officer **Laura Ruffles**, Helloworld GM Independent and Corporate Networks **David Padman**, and newcomer **David Greenland** from Reed & Mackay, who only recently filled the casual Board vacancy left by the death of CT Partners GM Ian Edwards just before Christmas (*TD* 05 Jan).

The four nominees who have not previously been on the AFTA Board include Tweet World Travel CEO **Thuy Carroll**, BCD Travel MD Australia **Tass Messinis**, Luxury Escapes Senior Manager **Paul Gorman** and **Katrina Barry**, MD of Trafalgar and Contiki Holidays.

Voting closed on 01 Jul, with the ballot paper including a reminder that only Full Members are able to vote, as defined by the AFTA Constitution.

The results will be announced at

the AGM which is now set to take place virtually next Tue 13 Jul due to the COVID-19 uncertainty.

MEANWHILE AFTA has also confirmed that about 70% of its members have renewed for the 2021/22 year, with the response in line with forecasts reflecting the impact of the pandemic on the industry.

"We are pleased to share that despite the devastating impact of COVID and travel restrictions on our sector and our members, we are well and truly on track with member renewals and budget forecasts," said AFTA Chairman Tom Manwaring.

"So far over 70% of members have renewed, and more are still submitting...given the devastating reality of the impact of COVID on so many businesses, this is quite a remarkable outcome," he said.

AFTA will this afternoon hold a member-only online webinar - **REGISTER HERE.**

Maldives adventures

TRUTRAVELS has introduced new Maldives trips targeting younger travellers.

The adventure operator is responding to post-pandemic travel patterns with the tours, which include sandbar parties, a barbecue dinner on a private island, and snorkelling with turtles, with prices starting from \$2,330 per person.

CLICK HERE for more details for bookings and experiences.

Aurora postpones

AURORA Expeditions has deferred its local restart until its planned Antarctic Peninsula voyages in Nov, describing the shift as a "postponement, not a cancellation".

CEO Monique Ponfoort said while Aurora had ongoing constructive engagement with State and Federal Governments to bring its *Greg Mortimer* into local waters, it "remains unable to give clarity to passengers on departure voyage dates".

"In these challenging times of uncertainty surrounding travel start dates, we have taken a leadership position to deliver a clear and committed pathway forward with the utmost respect to both the Government and our guests, staff, expedition team and our travel trade partners."

CX lifestyle brand

CATHAY Pacific has unveiled a new premium travel lifestyle brand called Cathay, offering a range of promotions for dining, shopping, hotels and wellness.

The first of these offers will be a CX co-branded credit card which will be launched in Hong Kong soon, and then rolled out to a number of global markets later.

NZ bubble update

NEW Zealand will resume the trans-Tasman bubble to Western Australia and the Northern Territory from 10 Jul.

NSW & Qld will remain on pause until COVID case numbers drop.

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Visit Oman launch

OMAN Tourism has unveiled the country's first "authorised national online booking and information gateway" for the travel trade, with registration now open for partners in international markets wanting to be part of the expected post-COVID boom.

The site at visitoman.om is part of a strategy to digitise the country's tourism supply chain.

The evolving portal aims to offer trade partners and consumers "quality assured packages with instant confirmation, fully supported by destination and partnership specialists".

Offered, not jabbed is the key: Joyce

QANTAS Airways Chief Executive Officer Alan Joyce has said the number of Australians who are offered a vaccine, rather than how many take it, should be the key to unlocking the country's international borders.

Joyce agreed with Victorian Premier Daniel Andrews and Queensland Premier Annastacia Palaszczuk, who both championed the notion last week.

Lockdown domino effect

AUSTRALIA'S latest lockdowns have curtailed hotel bookings, with forecasts for key markets showing significantly lower levels of hotel occupancy over the coming weeks.

Uncertainty, as well as lockdowns in other parts of the country, have affected all Australian markets, new figures from STR show, with Sydney hit particularly hard.

According to data from STR's Forward STAR, the Harbour City's occupancy is down an average of 13.8% when comparing 28 Jun with the 21 Jun update.

Occupancy for the current week ending 03 Jul is unlikely to exceed the 20% mark, which would be a 50% decline from previous weeks.

So far this year, Australia has been one of the world's highest-performing countries, STR said, with improving mid-week demand alongside continued weekend strength.

Year-to-date through May, Australia's revenue per available room (RevPAR) reached 74% of 2019 levels, however, the typical booking pace for the upcoming

month has slowed dramatically across all Aussie markets, leading to a sustained impact on occupancy.

"Since the second week of Jun, the Delta strain of the virus emerged in the community, and lockdowns in Victoria followed by New South Wales, Queensland, Northern Territory and Western Australia have taken a toll on occupancy," said STR's Regional Manager Pacific Matthew Burke.

"The lockdowns have been particularly damaging for what was expected to be a rise in demand entering a strong leisure period with winter school holidays.

"The Gold Coast was not yet in lockdown at the time we processed this latest forward-looking data, but because the Sydney basin is a large source market, the Gold Coast too saw more cancellations than new bookings for the coming two weeks," he added.

Burke also observed North Queensland had been adversely affected for three straight weeks with cancellations outweighing new bookings during the region's peak season.

Robertson VA role

VIRGIN Australia veteran Neil Robertson has been appointed as the carrier's new Manager, Inside Sales, with responsibility for driving bookings in the SME, mid-market corporate, business events, group travel, retail, wholesale and TMC channels.

No Florence strolls

EVENING walks in Florence, Italy, are the latest victim of the COVID-19 pandemic, with the city's Mayor Dario Nardella issuing a new ordinance limiting access to six historic areas between 9pm and 6am unless people have been dining there.

The regulation will be in place until the end of the pandemic.

Trusted travel brand

QANTAS Airways is Australia's fifth most-trusted brand this year, according to polling from Roy Morgan, and the only travel brand in the top 10.

It is a slight drop for Australia's flag-carrier, which came in at third position in the same poll last year (**TD** 28 May 2020).

Unfortunately, tourism was well-represented in the least-trusted list, with Crown Resorts and Uber both ranked toward the bottom.

Know the Seychelles

TRAVEL advisors are being invited to "dive deeper In The Seychelles", with luxury tour operator If Only teaming up with the Seychelles Tourism Board (STB) for the next phase of the marketing campaign.

The drive will underline the broad appeal of the Seychelles for families and couples, with advisors invited to join representatives from If Only and STB on 04 Aug for a comprehensive training webinar.

More details on the If Only Partners Facebook page **HERE**.

Tourism job push

TOURISM Western Australia has partnered with a training council in a bid to attract more people to work in the tourism and hospitality sectors.

The government body has linked with FutureNow, a workforce development organisation specialising in sectors such as tourism, to "inspire the workforce of tomorrow to take up a career in tourism and hospitality".

The partnership will include promoting tourism and hospitality through demonstrations at the Skills West Careers Expo on 26-28 Aug, as well as in-school presentations to promote career opportunities in the industry.

"It's one of several initiatives being delivered through Tourism WA to address the workforce concerns in the industry," Tourism WA MD Derryn Belford said.

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Three more golden years



GOLDMAN Group joint Managing Director Anthony Goldman has been elected to a new three-year term as the Virtuoso Travel Global Member Advisory Board's AU-NZ Director. Since 2017, Goldman has brought his many decades of travel industry experience to Virtuoso, previously as an Asia-Pacific Director and as an Advisory Board Member.

He is also a member of the Travel Advisory Board for both Accor and Six Senses Hotels Resorts Spas.

"We do have fun times and I take the responsibility seriously, especially at these times," Goldman said.

Virtuoso also recently named Karen Joyce as its new General Manager for Europe, the Middle East and Africa (**TD** 30 Jun).

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Travel Daily

AFTA UPDATE

from the Australian Federation of Travel Agents

WE START this new financial year with a lot more clarity about how Australia and Australians begin to live a more "normal" existence. National Cabinet's agreement in principle on

the four-stage plan to return to normal is definitely welcome.

The approach, like the Singapore Government's approach AFTA referenced last week, is anchored in the reality of us all having to live with COVID-19 for the immediate and perhaps indefinite future. Our ability to progress through the stages to the point of being able to travel internationally hinges on vaccination thresholds.

We don't yet know what those levels of vaccinated Australians are that Government is looking for. Some Premiers have referenced "when all those who want to get vaccinated have been." NSW Premier Gladys Berejiklian has indicated she would be comfortable with 80% of the adult population. The long and the short of it is that we need more people getting vaccinated more quickly.

While the 'expert advice' is that international travel is unlikely to commence until mid-2022 through to late-2022, our efforts are on the key booking periods



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for agency cash flow gains. That period we believe still relates to late 2021 into 2022. We must get the vaccination triggers lined up with that principle – it's a realistic objective given United Kingdom/

Europe and USA trends.

What is also clear is that until international travel normalises, our members and our sector needs ongoing government support.

The reality is that we have already lost approximately 15,000 jobs in our sector as a result of the COVID shutdown.

These are highly-skilled and experienced individuals whom we simply can't afford to lose and whom consumers are relying heavily on now to help navigate the multiple travel challenges created by COVID.

We are very grateful for the Federal Government's COVID-19 Consumer Travel Support Program which has seen \$258 million in support for Australian travel and tourism businesses including travel agents. But we need this support extended and supplemented urgently. This is where our current focus of advocacy at a member and organisation level lies and will remain. Let's get Australia travel ready!

AirAsia Indo pause

SPIRALLING cases of COVID-19 in Indonesia has prompted AirAsia Indonesia to suspend all of its domestic and international services for at least a month to support government authorities' efforts to suppress the latest outbreak.

At this stage, passenger flights will not resume until 06 Aug, while cargo services will continue uninterrupted to carry crucial goods and medical supplies.

Indonesia is suffering heavily under the weight of COVID-19, recently recording in excess of 25,000 new cases a day, amounting to a total of around 2.3 million positive cases to date.

MSC starts Germany

MSC Cruises has marked the start of its northern Europe summer sailings from Germany this week, with *MSC Seaview* operating seven-night itineraries from Kiel exploring the Baltic Sea.

Seaview will homeport in Kiel until the start of Oct, with calls featured on the voyages to include the town of Visby on the Swedish island of Gotland, as well as Nynashamn near the Swedish capital city of Stockholm and Estonia's capital Tallinn.

The resumption follows the announcement that the cruise line's upcoming *MSC Euribia* vessel will join the company's fleet in Jun 2023 (**TD** 30 Jun).



Aviation key to Pacific rebound

AVIATION will form a crucial pillar of pandemic recovery planning for Pacific Island nations, the Pacific Regional Aviation Ministers Meeting has heard.

“We need to shift our thinking and our approach from ‘business as usual’ and start to explore new and innovative approaches to create a more safe, secure and sustainable aviation sector for our region,” Secretary General of the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat Henry Puna said.

MONEY

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

AU\$1 = US\$0.754

THE Australian dollar rose sharply towards the end of last week despite a much stronger result from the United States’ non-farm employment number, which was expected to take a toll on the AUDUSD.

Instead the Aussie gained 0.8% against the greenback, and was also stronger in key markets like the UK (up 0.5%) Wholesale rates this morning.

| | |
|--------------|-----------|
| US | \$0.754 |
| UK | £0.544 |
| NZ | \$1.069 |
| Euro | €0.635 |
| Japan | ¥83.66 |
| Thailand | ฿24.21 |
| China | ¥4.87 |
| South Africa | 10.75 |
| Canada | \$0.930 |
| Crude oil | US\$77.10 |

Making a bird of the Galapagos



CELEBRITY'S new-luxury mega yacht *Celebrity Flora* (pictured inset) has recently started undertaking new seven-night itineraries exploring Ecuador’s Galapagos Islands.

The ship precedes fellow Celebrity vessels in the famed archipelago, including *Celebrity Xpedition* which embarks on sailings to the Galapagos on 24 Jul, as well as the smaller 16-passenger *Celebrity Xploration*, which will operate voyages from 18 Sep.

The all-inclusive Galapagos Experience packages on board *Flora* boast five-star accommodation in Ecuador’s capital, twice daily shore excursions, unlimited wi-fi, and all meals & drinks.

“The Galapagos Islands are a treasure and a destination that is incomparable to any other in the world,” Celebrity Cruises CEO Lisa Lutoff-Perlo said.

“We couldn’t be more excited to welcome guests aboard the most special ship in this region for the



very special, bucket-list voyage they have been dreaming of for so many months,” she added.

For more details on the sailings, [CLICK HERE](#).

US confidence boom

MORE than 75% of Americans have indicated they would feel safe if their local communities were to open to visitors, according to a new study by Longwoods International.

“The 2021 leisure travel boom is real, barring any setbacks battling COVID-19, we expect robust growth for the rest of the year,” Longwoods International CEO Amir Eylon said.

voco’s SK debut

IHG Hotels & Resorts has announced plans to construct the 280-room voco Pyeongtaek City hotel in South Korea, featuring the city’s only rooftop pool with a 360° view of Godeok city.

Further amenities will include a restaurant, lounge and bar, fitness centre and large spaces for meetings and conferences.

Voco Pyeongtaek City will be IHG’s 10th hotel in South Korea and will open in 2023.

Koh Samui revealed

HYATT Regency Koh Samui in Thailand has been unveiled to the public for the first time, a sprawling 140-room property that occupies eight acres of private coastline in the far northeast corner of the island.

Among the luxury resort’s many features is the largest pool zone on Koh Samui, a collection of interconnected pools that cascade down from the main area on the property’s upper deck.

Further attractions include a “showpiece lobby” (pictured), 24 spacious suites and villas boasting private balconies and sea views, an elegant ballroom that can accommodate up to 150 guests, as well as four restaurants & bars.



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