

Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today has five pages of news including Business Events News.

Pelikin bags Duffel

TRAVEL app Pelikin has unveiled a new partnership with flight tech platform Duffel, enabling the company's users to book flights through Duffel's range of airline partners, a move foreshadowed by *Travel Daily* last month (*TD* 24 Jun).

The partnership will see Pelikin integrate into Duffel's Flights API, a development Pelikin CEO Sam Brown believes will provide its users with access to the best flight deals in the market.

"Offering flights via our app has been a feature we've been keen to add, but getting all of the various accreditations and building a platform capable of doing it in a way that benefits our customers made it almost prohibitively difficult and time-consuming...Duffel removes these barriers," Brown said.

The integration has seen Jerome King recruited as Head of Flights to manage the new service, where he will work with airline partners to design flexible products for younger travellers - more appointments on **page five**.

Choice calls for reforms

CONSUMER advocacy group Choice has called on State and Federal Governments to enact major reforms in the travel sector in a bid to improve transparency around refunds due to external events, such as the current pandemic (*TD* breaking news).

The seven "urgent reforms" requested by Choice are based on a survey of 4,400 Australians who had travel plans disrupted by COVID-19, with many stating they "faced inconsistent and unfair treatment", including a portion who were forced to wait more than six months for a refund.

"Australians were forced to navigate cancellation chaos rather than receiving clear and practical advice on their rights," Choice Consumer Rights Expert Alison Elliott said.

"Many people are now grappling with impractical limitations on travel vouchers and unfair solutions to a problem they didn't cause.

"Just like the EU and UK, we should have clear rights to refunds when travel plans are cancelled," Elliott added.

Among the changes being called for are mandatory refund requirements when travel has been disrupted by external circumstances, minimum voucher

& credit rights, a compulsory industry code for large travel providers, the creation of a travel and tourism industry ombudsman, as well as a mandatory information standard at the time of booking.

Choice is also advocating for an ACCC-led market study into the travel and tourism sector and the launch of a national travel restrictions website.

Key findings of the recent Choice report found close to one in four consumers had to wait longer than six months for a refund, while around a third were without a refund for between three and six months.

Only a fifth secured their money back within 30 days, whereas 26% were granted a refund between one and three months, and 5% said they had lost their trip and money altogether.

Responding to the report this morning, the Australian Federation of Travel Agents reiterated the "tireless work" of Aussie advisors to secure refunds, citing the sector's success in chasing and securing an estimated \$7 billion worth of credits and refunds for COVID-impacted travel.

We will continue to support consumers through the multiple challenges faced, AFTA said.

Viagogo scrutinised

TICKET exchange company Viagogo is being investigated by NSW Fair Trading following a spike in consumer discontent.

There have been 36 complaints lodged about Viagogo so far this year, including 16 relating to ticket scalping, 11 alleging the cancellation of events that were not refunded, five to do with misleading conduct, three for tickets not being delivered in a timely manner, and one for not providing age restriction advice.

NSW Fair Trading Commissioner Rose Webb said companies like Viagogo should not get away with unethical practices, especially as the sector struggles to recover.

Viagogo was ordered to pay \$7m in fines for dodgy conduct last year (*TD* 06 Oct 2020).

Royal ups Singapore

ROYAL Caribbean International (RCI) has extended its season of Singapore cruises, after Brisbane's *Quantum of the Seas* deployment was cancelled (*TD* yesterday).

The ship's Singapore season has been extended through to Feb 2022, with Dec marking a year since *Quantum* returned to sailing in Singapore, and 82,000 guests having travelled safely to date.

Unfortunately, RCI's Hong Kong *Spectrum of the Seas* cruises have been delayed from Jul to Oct.

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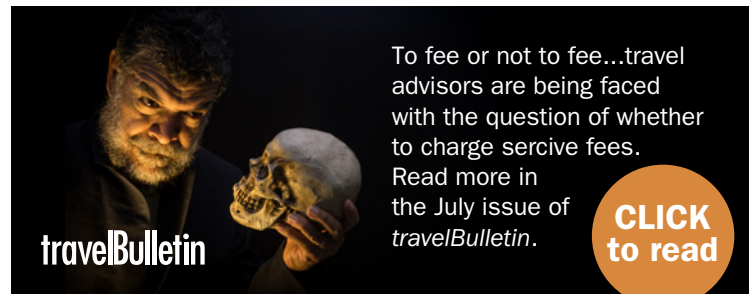
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To fee or not to fee...travel advisors are being faced with the question of whether to charge service fees. Read more in the July issue of *travelBulletin*.

CLICK to read

Magellan agents switch to CT

THE CT Partners travel buying group this morning announced the addition of two high-profile Vic agencies, both formerly long-time members of Helloworld's Magellan Travel Group.

Where2Travel and Benalla Travel were "motivated by the simplicity and transparency of the CT Partners business model, with 100% of all supplier payments distributed through to members," said CT Partners Chair Barry Mayo.

Where2travel is a family-owned multi-location business with stores in the Melbourne suburbs of Malvern, Glen Waverley and Greensborough, while Benalla Travel is located in regional Vic, about 200km from the capital.

Both agencies remained with Magellan when it was controversially acquired by Helloworld Travel Ltd just over three years ago (**TD** 02 Mar 2018).

Where2travel GM Steve Bouyer said the agency and its associated

brands where2cruise, Sage Travel and Independent Travel Designers had decided to join CT Partners after "extensive research of possible buying group options".

He said the move "ensures we are well positioned" for when the PM's new pathway to normalising Australian travel is implemented.

Benalla Travel Director Fiona Stephens said CT Partners' transparency and 100% member ownership "suits our company philosophy and allows us full control to grow our corporate and premium leisure business".

It's understood that contracts signed by Magellan members at the time of the takeover expired at the end of last month, while **Travel Daily** sources indicate as many as 33 members have not yet re-signed with HLO.

Helloworld and Magellan weren't able to comment on the membership departures before **TD's** deadline today.

Whitsundays flights

QANTASLINK is gearing up to launch direct flights from Brisbane to the Whitsunday Coast (Proserpine) for the first time in seven years, commencing 17 Sep.

The carrier will operate up to seven weekly return flights using a 74-seat Q400 turboprop aircraft, adding more than 1,000 seats on the route each week.

"These new flights also open up the Whitsunday Coast to Qantas customers across the country who will be able to seamlessly connect through Brisbane from our extensive domestic network," QantasLink CEO John Gissing said.

Flights will be a reduced \$109 one-way price until 17 Jul.

A Box of Wonder

TRAVELLERS who spend \$500 or more on Ovolo e-Gift Cards will receive a bonus "Box of Wonder", containing a candy loot bag, Ovolo cocktail, a robe, hotel slippers & more, valued at \$120.

Jayne backs vaccination plan

VIRGIN Australia Group CEO Jayne Hrdlicka has thrown her support behind a plan for businesses to operate internal vaccination programs to take pressure off the government.

Speaking at the Operation COVID Shield National Business Partnership Forum meeting this week, the VA chief argued the idea made sense given the need to "get a large number of people vaccinated in a short period of time", with the private sector efficacies likely to be a great asset during the undertaking.

Hrdlicka also advocated for a public education program to combat misinformation and vaccine hesitancy.

"People need to understand that the only way to protect themselves and their loved ones is to get vaccinated as soon as possible, VA would be happy to support an education campaign."

Did you know?

Travel & Cruise Weekly's fortnightly consumer magazine called **Keep Dreaming** is specially designed for agents to send their clients - giving you a reason to reach out to your database.

Keep Dreaming is full of destination articles, cruise stories and more to inspire.

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Cash back for delays

THE US Government is proposing changes to travel laws that will see travellers receive refunds if their bags are delivered late or onboard wi-fi is faulty.

A spokesperson for the US Department of Transportation said the new rules would help to promote "fair competition" in the country's airline sector.

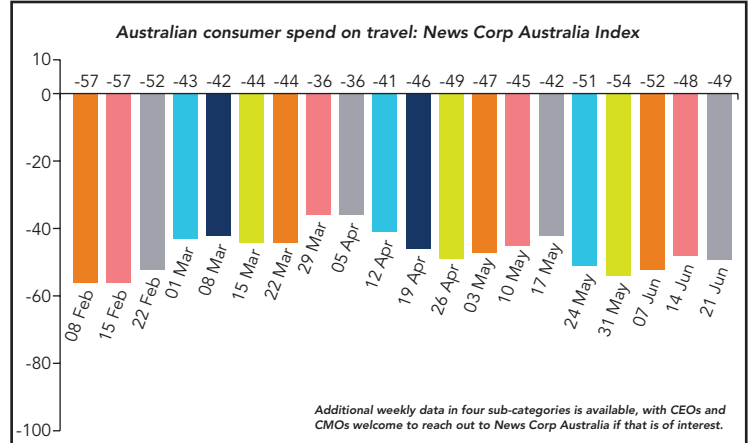
President Biden's plan follows in the footsteps of former President Obama, whose govt created rules for airlines to refund bag fees when luggage is lost.

Air NZ reboots int'l

AIR New Zealand will make its return to a number of int'l destinations on 31 Oct for the first time since the pandemic shut its borders, including 12 services a week to North America.

Cities on the list for three times weekly return flights include LA, San Francisco and Vancouver, with the airline also reinstating flights to Honolulu (three times weekly), Singapore (seven times weekly), Narita (once weekly), Hong Kong (once weekly) & Taipei (once weekly).

Spend minimally impacted



EXCLUSIVE

TRAVEL spend didn't dip significantly with Greater Sydney going into lockdown, but that's "nothing to be excited about", according to News Corp Head of Travel Dwayne Birtles.

Surprisingly, there was not a large drop in consumer travel spend, as tracked by News Corp, which only dropped 1 percentage point overall to -49%.

The biggest drop seen for the recorded week was the Tours category, falling by 9 percentage points to -63%.

All other categories stayed relatively on par with the prior week, with a small increase for Cruise (rising 2 percentage points) and Airline spending over \$500 (up 1 percentage point).

Birtles suggests the unexpected

result is due to the lockdowns occurring in the back half of the week, and Melbournians spending on travel within their own state, offsetting some losses.

"However, it is very likely we will see more impact to spend in the coming weeks," he warned.

"This week can really be seen as a holding pattern from consumers as they wait, watch and see with disappointment in the State and Federal Governments' inability to manage a crisis and failure to truly consider the mental and economic impacts," Birtles added.

Aiden coming to Oz

BWH Hotel Group has announced that its trendy suburban hotel brand Aiden by Best Western will make its debut in Australia in Sep.

Aiden Darling Harbour in Sydney is now taking bookings and will feature 88 luxury and compact rooms, a cafe & bar, and a 1930s Art Deco design.

"At a time when travellers are demanding even more from their stays, Aiden allows guests to find joy in an affordable luxury hotel immersed in the centre of the community whilst portraying the surrounding neighbourhood's unique personality," BWH Hotel Group for Australasia Managing Director Graham Perry said.

Opening rates start at \$249 per night with a 24-hour cancellation policy applying to all bookings.

Window Seat

IN AUSTRALIA, "The Great Race" typically refers to the Bathurst 1,000, but another of these is set to return to the Sunshine Coast next Sun.

The Great Australian Dunny Race, hosted at the Banana Bender Pub at Aussie World theme park, will return on 18 Jul, seeing teams of four runners pushing a dunny with one jockey mounted atop to compete for \$5,000.

The race started back in 1990 at Aussie World, and was the brainchild of local Lindsay Cooper and an assortment of his cronies, quickly becoming one of the Sunshine Coast's most unique events.



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BUSINESS EVENTS REIMAGINED

INNOVATION will be key to ensuring the global business events sector weathers the pandemic, according to a new White Paper released last week by the Professional Convention Management Association (PCMA), Singapore Tourism Board and the Global Association of the Exhibition Industry (UFI).

Titled *Reimagining Business Events Through COVID-19 and Beyond*, the document was launched at Marina Bay Sands in Singapore, during the hybrid Singapore MICE Forum x IBTM Wired event.

Acknowledging the massive impact of the pandemic on the business events industry, the paper notes that “although most professionals in the industry agree that face-to-face meetings remain relevant, they also agree on the urgent need to rethink and re-engineer business events”.

In 2017 business events generated US\$2.5 trillion in output, with over 1.5 billion participants from 180 countries - contributing US\$1.5 trillion to global GDP which would make it the 13th largest global economy - ahead of Australia and Mexico.

And while 2020 saw massive losses incurred across the sector,



there are “strong indications of growth and innovation” particularly in the Asia Pacific.

“Exhibitors in Asia are much more optimistic about their budgets, and the number of events they are planning to participate in has recovered to pre-pandemic levels,” the report notes - along with a stronger appetite for digital or hybrid events across the region.

Companies operating in the sector are being urged to reimagine their business models, with the paper suggesting they “think and behave like a start-up”.

Digital transformation will be key both in terms of the delegate

experience and engagement with employees, who will require stronger digital literacy & skills.

“While it is hard to predict what the sector will look like in a few years, it is abundantly clear that organisations must apply hybrid solutions in the short & medium term, and continue to adapt and respond to the changing needs of customers to the best of their ability,” the report suggests.

“Whoever meets customers’ needs in the most effective and economical way will recover fastest and serve as a beacon for the rest of the sector.”

The full report (**pictured**) is available at stb.gov.sg.

MCEC launches sustainability strategy

THE Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre (MCEC) has unveiled a five-year sustainability road map, with the aim of further enhancing its reputation as a leading sustainable event destination.

Targets in the plan, led by Sustainability Manager Samantha Ferrier, have been set in nine key priority areas, including climate change, waste and resource recovery, energy, water, infrastructure and transport, procurement, nature, education and equality recognition.

MCEC CEO Peter King said the

strategy embraces everything the venue stands for.

“It commits us to doing things differently, it’s bold in its targets, pursues strong partnerships and aims to leave a legacy,” he said.

King said MCEC acknowledged its responsibility to reduce demand on the planet’s finite resources.

“Through the targets in this strategy we are sending a clear message that we can and will do more to provide better outcomes for our community, our customers and our environment,” he added.

EIC appointment

THE Events Industry Council (EIC) has named Augustine (Gus) Chijioke as its Director of Certification and Education.

The Washington DC-based EIC comprises more than 30 member organisations, with a vision to be the “global champion for event professionals and event industry excellence,” through its Certified Meeting Professional (CMP) program.

Chijioke was previously Director of Membership & Certification at Capital Association Management.

ICC instant pivot

THE snap lockdown in Sydney has seen International Convention Centre Sydney (ICC) support a key client by converting the Royal College of Pathologists Australasia (RCPA) Pathology Update 2021 into a 100% virtual experience.

CEO Geoff Donaghy said ICC set in motion the digital event scenario that was built into early event plans, enabling a seamless transition complete with keynote speakers, workshops, breakout sessions & exhibition content, with the transition to virtual enacted in just 48 hours.

“The venue’s ability to remain open to provide these important services to the community is of great benefit, and will enrich the medical profession and the knowledge economy for years to come,” he said.

PCOA keynote

MATTHEW Findlay will be a key presenter at the upcoming Professional Conference Organisers Association (PCOA) PCOA21, taking place at Hobart’s Hotel Grand Chancellor 05-07 Dec.

Findlay is Director - Global Markets for Ailevon Pacific Aviation Consulting, with a range of experience at airports across the globe including services, property development, retail and corporate affairs.

PCOA21 program director, Paula Leishman, said “Matthew is a great fit for the program,” able to give delegates a broader view of the aviation world including what airlines are doing to help the recovery of the business events industry - see pcoaconference.com.au.



If you can't beat them, ban them!

CANBERRA Airport's CEO is so frustrated with border policies in Western Australia and South Australia that he wants flights from Adelaide and Perth to be banned from entering the ACT.

Stephen Byron said there was no lawful reason why ACT residents can't travel to SA/WA when there had been zero local COVID cases since Jul 2020.

"Our proposal is that flights between Perth and Canberra and Adelaide and Canberra be suspended until the airport and the airlines get a guarantee that borders will not be closed while there are zero cases," Byron said, adding the ACT currently blocks residents from Greater Sydney from entering the city, so the restrictions make no sense.

Royal's chatty ships

ROYAL Caribbean International has reportedly introduced its guest-to-guest chat feature via the line's onboard app to every ship in the company's fleet.

The cost of using the messaging service will set passengers back US\$1.99 per guest a day, with the communication service also accessible for those who opt not to purchase an internet plan.

Royal Caribbean's chat function offers one-to-one guest texting, as well as group functionality, with selected guests to show up on displays as either offline or online if they have the app open.

Travel agents have the option of linking their client's reservation before they embark, with friends or family to automatically show up in the guest's list of contacts once this is completed.

QTIC drives cultural change



THE Queensland Tourism Industry Council (QTIC) had more than 350 guests at its NAIDOC Corporate Breakfast yesterday, with special guests Anita Heiss and John Paul Janke (pictured).

Coming together in the Year of Indigenous Tourism, this year's NAIDOC theme of "Heal Country" calls for stronger measures to recognise, protect and maintain all aspects of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture.

Quandamooka man and QTIC Deputy Chair Cameron Costello said the Council had increased its focus on First Nations tourism, with such events helping to unite, collaborate, and bring about change for the future.

"QTIC is a leader in driving Indigenous tourism, starting out through employment and training and now broadened to a comprehensive strategic plan including the development of a peak body for First Nations tourism, led by First Nations people," he said.

"There are many tourism businesses out there and all over

Queensland who are keen to engage with traditional owners-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders to develop a unique and authentic experience for people visiting Queensland.

"Now is the time to promote the collective vision that we have and I think we are on the cusp of something really fantastic."

Minister for Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Partnerships Craig Crawford encouraged all Australians to embrace the country's First Nations cultures.

"Queensland is enriched by the languages, cultures and diversity of First Nations peoples, and it is vital for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders to be at the heart of these tourism initiatives," he said.

May shows promise

GLOBAL pax demand in May was 85.1% below May 2019 but was a small increase of 2.1% on the previous month, however the Asia Pacific was the only region not showing gains, falling 0.1%.

APPOINTMENTS

WELCOME to Industry Appointments, *Travel Daily's* Thursday feature which has the latest job appointments from across the industry. If you have just appointed someone to a new position and would like to update the industry email appointments@traveldaily.com.au.

Singapore Airlines has announced the appointment of **Yeoh Oon Jin** to its Board as an Independent Non-Executive Director, a role he will assume from 01 Aug. Jin is a former Executive Chairman of PwC Singapore & also serves as the Chair of the Singapore Land Authority.

Jip van Driest has been recruited to be **Frasers Hospitality Australia's** Director of Development Australia, a newly created position that will see her charged with building the company's growth trajectory by identifying acquisition opportunities and developing new markets.

Destination Scenic Rim has announced the appointment of **Jessica Greenaway** to be its inaugural CEO. The former Director of Community and Economic Development at Winton Shire Council will be responsible for developing tourism opportunities in Qld's Scenic Rim region.

Hahn Air has appointed **Christoph Althoff** as its new Vice President where he will lead the airline's pursuit of new technologies and expand its sales development strategies.

For confidential tip offs, connect with *Travel Daily* via our secure WhatsApp service on +61 2 8007 6760 or click [HERE](#)