

Hawaiian cuts slice

HAWAIIAN Airlines has become the latest carrier to take a piece out of the travel agent remuneration pie, announcing that effective from 01 Jul it will adjust point of sale commissions for tickets in Australia to just 1%.

The carrier told travel partners it was making the move "after extensive market review to help [the airline's] recovery and help ensure it can provide competitive quality products to our customers".

Hawaiian's 01 Jul reduction mirrors plans previously announced by Qantas and Emirates, while Cathay Pacific is cutting travel agent base commission from 01 Apr.

HA also last week announced the indefinite cessation of its Brisbane-Honolulu flights.

Day of action next Tue

THE Australian travel, tourism and cruise sectors will gather at the offices of state and federal MPs across the country next Tue, urging support for the shattered industry and the lifting of restrictions to allow businesses to trade like the rest of the economy.

Anyone in travel or tourism is being invited to join the push, which is being coordinated through a rapidly-growing grass-roots Facebook group with members including travel agents, cruise suppliers, tour operators and other industry businesses.

The organisers have been engaging with peak industry bodies including AFTA, CLIA and CATO to ensure they focus on delivering the right messages and support the ongoing lobbying work being undertaken in Canberra and Australia's State and Territory capitals.

AFTA has confirmed that the resources available under its Dec

2021 Mobilisation Campaign have been endorsed for use by the group, calling on MPs to urgently consider AFTA's travel sector skills retention and recovery package.

Prospective participants are invited to join the Aussie Travel Action Group on Facebook ([CLICK HERE](#)) and invite their industry friends and colleagues to take part.

A maximum of 20 people will attend the electoral offices between 11am and 1pm, with MPs to also be invited to meet with impacted travel business owners and staff on the day.

It's being suggested that attendees prepare a brief outline of the human impact of the pandemic on their business, their family and on the people who work (or worked) with them.

Local media are also being engaged to raise awareness, and participants will engage the community in conversation about the dire position of their business.

The Day of Action will also aim to see activity across the country posted across social media using the #AussieTravelActionGroup hashtag, with the organisers saying "the overall message is that it is a day of sadness and desperation that has come to this" - join in at facebook.com.

Mousing around

DISNEY Destinations will host a second session of its MouserClass Webinar series at noon on 27 Jan, covering park reservations across Walt Disney World Resort and Disneyland Resort - to attend the informative event, [REGISTER HERE](#).

Get Local regos

REGISTRATIONS are now open for attendees at next month's 2022 Get Local trade show, taking place 14-15 Feb at ICC Sydney.

Anyone who organises group travel is invited to see the latest offerings from across Australia, with details on the [last page](#).

Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today has five pages of news including **Business Events News**, plus full pages from:

- Entire Travel Group
- Regent Seven Seas Cruises
- Get Local 2022

New Dalton role

FIONA Dalton was today announced as the new General Manager of Virtuoso Australia and New Zealand.

Dalton, who has been contracting to Virtuoso since stepping down from her role as CEO of The Travel Corporation (TD 15 Jan 2021), will report to Vice President of Global Operations, Michael Londregan.

More industry appointments on [page five](#) of today's *Travel Daily*.

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Regent upgrades

REGENT Seven Seas Cruises is offering a free two-category suite upgrade as well as reduced deposits of just 7.5% on every destination in 2022-2024, along with a travel advisor incentive of \$250 for every new deposited booking of a first-time cruise guest - more info on [page seven](#).

Walshe wins NYC

THE Walshe Group has been reappointed as the Australian and New Zealand representative for NYC and Company, having held the contract since 2014.

Executive Chairman Jacqui Walshe said she was "extremely proud we will again represent NYC & Co in Australia/New Zealand as our market is ready to rebound from the challenges of COVID-19 and travel again".

"Despite the global pandemic, New York City remains one of the world's most exhilarating and iconic destinations," she said.

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Qantas pushes for direct

NEW benefits for Qantas Frequent Flyers are only available when they book directly with the airline (**TD** breaking news).

The carrier is also making a concerted effort to boost the ranks of its loyalty program, allowing customers to sign up to the Qantas Frequent Flyer program for free when making a booking on [qantas.com](https://www.qantas.com) - rather than the customary \$99.50 fee.

Under the changes, all Qantas Frequent Flyers now receive complimentary standard seat selection on all QF-operated international bookings originating from Australia - a feature previously only available to

Bronze members if they booked Economy Saver or Flex fares.

QF said the measure could save pax up to \$90 per person on a return SYD-LAX flight.

Effective immediately, all Qantas Frequent Flyers can also cancel their flights without charge within 24 hours of making their direct booking if they change their mind, as long as the departure date is 30 days or more away.

"These changes mean frequent flyers who book their flights directly through the Qantas website receive additional benefits, making it easier to plan their trips and in some cases cheaper," a spokesperson said.

The Qantas website also touts other benefits of direct bookings, including "no booking fees when you book directly online with us" and the ability to correct flight details such as incorrect dates or misspelt names on the same day as booking, without change fees.

Crystal shattered

THE fallout regarding Genting Hong Kong's precarious financial position (**TD** 19 Jan) continues, with the company's Crystal Cruises brand suspending operations temporarily.

The pause will be in place for ocean and expedition sailings until at least 29 Apr, while river cruises will be halted until the end of May - more details in today's issue of *Cruise Weekly*.

Cunard reveals 2023

CUNARD has unveiled its latest collection of sailings for 2023, announcing 150 departures between 23 Apr and 15 Dec.

The collection of sailings includes visits to 120 ports and 35 countries, ranging from two to 37 nights in duration.

A series of 10-night Alaska roundtrips, a 16-night Baltics voyage, and a 14-night Canada and New England sailing are among the highlights of the latest batch of cruises, while key itineraries of the line's World Awaits Voyage was also revealed.

These include a transatlantic crossing to New York to explore New England and Canada, as well as a 12-night Spain and Portugal leg visiting The Canary Islands.

We want you back!

PRIME Minister Scott Morrison yesterday revealed that overseas students and backpackers arriving in Australia will now have their \$630 visa fees rebated in a bid to lure more skilled workers.

The Department of Home Affairs incentive will be in place for at least the next three months, and will also be supported by a \$3 million tourism campaign set to launch in key overseas markets.

"My message to backpackers is come on down...we want you to come to Australia and enjoy a holiday here," Morrison said.

"We want you to move all the way around the country, and at the same time join our workforce and help us in our agricultural sector and our hospitality sector."

The govt has also extended visas for graduates who were outside the country between 01 Feb 2020 and 14 Dec 2021, and sanctioned subclass 485 visaholders to return from 18 Feb.

Do not visit Australia

THE US Government has placed a Level 4 travel warning on its citizens travelling to Australia due to "life-threatening risks".

"The Department of State advises that US citizens not travel to the country or to leave as soon as it is safe to do so," an advisory stated late yesterday.

While Australia is currently ranked second in the world for the number of daily COVID infections per capita, it remains one of the lowest for mortality.

The United States on the other hand is ranked the sixth most dangerous country in the world on a number of deaths per million of the population basis, according to Statista.com.

5G cancellations

SEVERAL airlines have elected to cancel a portion of flights to the United States amid fears 5G technology in the country poses a significant safety risk.

Among the carriers making changes to their schedules are British Airways, Emirates, All Nippon Airways and Air India, and follows a strong plea to the Biden Administration from United Airlines this week to reduce the 5G hazard to carriers (**TD** 19 Jan).

Boeing also delivered a warning notice to customers that 5G signals could interfere with radio altimeters on its 777 aircraft.

Bidding for upgrade

UNIWORLD Boutique River Cruises has introduced its Category+ program, allowing customers to bid on stateroom upgrades before their departure.

Customers who have booked on a cruise will be given the option of viewing a list of potential upgrade opportunities, with multiple offers allowed to increase the chances of securing a competitive price.

Travel advisors will also receive commissions on any additional money paid, with clients alerted of their bid status via email.



Window Seat

WHILE the scrapping of quarantine for vaccinated international travellers to Queensland was met with much fanfare yesterday (**TD** 20 Jan), the story has been tempered by some rather sad news.

It seems Australian export Peter Andre has signalled his intentions to return to the Sunshine State from the UK to visit his mother and family.

The 48-year-old *Mysterious Girl* singer took to Instagram to declare to the world that he plans to return to Australia as soon as he can with restrictions finally easing in the Aussie state.

There are also unconfirmed reports that Qld will grant Andre entry to the country, but only on condition that he promises not to sing publicly during his trip.



LHR to GRU deal

VIRGIN Atlantic has formed a new codeshare agreement with LATAM Airlines, allowing the former's customers to travel directly to Sao Paulo in Brazil from Heathrow Airport.

The new agreement will also allow VS passengers to connect onward to 12 other Brazilian destinations, including Rio de Janeiro, Salvador and Florianopolis.

Connecting flights from Sao Paulo to LATAM's international network through Terminal 3 is also on offer, including Tel Aviv in Israel, Delhi in India & Hong Kong.



WTTC goes into bat for cruise sector

WTTC President & CEO Julia Simpson has labelled the CDC's policy position on the cruise industry as "nonsensical", while addressing at the Fitur trade fair in Madrid.

"WTTC calls upon the CDC to stop singling out the cruise industry with harmful and unnecessary measures," she said.

"Cruise lines have an excellent record for health and safety, and cruising continues to offer extraordinary travel experiences.

"The cruise industry has proven time and again that its enhanced health and safety protocols consistently achieve significantly lower rates of COVID-19 occurrence than on shore."

Cradle Mtn upgrade

THE G'day Group plans to undertake a \$20 million redevelopment of its Discovery Parks – Cradle Mountain property, with the aim to make the site a world class eco glamping resort.

The major upgrade in Tassie will be conducted in stages, and includes the construction of 11 premium forest studio cabins on stilts connected by elevated, lit boardwalks.

Designs for the accommodation also features hydronic heating and reverse cycle air conditioning, double glazed windows, skylights, drying rooms and gas fireplaces.

The project will also see 40 caravan sites, as well as better disability access facilities.

"Our Cradle Mountain cabins are highly sought-after and this development will help to attract a new brand of traveller," G'day Group CEO Grant Wilckens said.

"Our research shows there's a strong intention in the market for people to travel to Tasmania - they're looking for eco-experiences, activities such as hiking, canoeing, native animal experiences as well as the fabulous food, wine and history Tassie is famous for," he added.

Without an agent you're on your own...

OPINION

Simon Bernardi is Managing Partner of Australia and Beyond Holidays.

Got an opinion to share? Let us know in up to 400 words via email to feedback@traveldaily.com.au.



UNDER the cover of COVID airlines are reducing commissions in unison. The turmoil caused by travel restrictions puts travel agents in the "box seat" to increase their margins.

Some airlines are reducing some customer services whilst simultaneously encouraging direct bookings at a time when they cannot handle existing customer enquiries adequately.

During the break we would have all read stories of consumers who booked online direct and were stuck in transit points without correct health documentation for their final destination and end up spending hours on the phone or talking to algorithm bots, or earlier this week a consumer who

called a Sydney radio station from London begging for assistance as over two days he had been on hold to a major Australian airline for nine hours combined

“
The turmoil caused by travel restrictions puts agents in the “box seat” to increase their margins
”

to change a flight, only to be cut off both times before getting through.

Recently reductions of customer service staff by airlines at Australian airports means that

customers are being encouraged to self-serve via call centres based across the world in different locations rather than find staff in the terminal.

We are seeing full service carriers adopting low-cost models but maintaining premium pricing to consumers.

With the issues facing travellers now it can cost hundreds if not thousands of dollars more to book direct than to use an agent.

This all contributes to a scenario where travel agents can fill the customer service offering gap being created by some suppliers and charge appropriate fees.

It is also reasonable for agents helping customers navigate the current restrictions to consider a COVID compliance fee just to interpret the changing jurisdictional rules and to be there when a customer does test positive overseas.

Because we all know without an agent they will be on their own and at the mercy of foreign call centres and in the queue with everyone else.

Aurora Travel on board



CT PARTNERS has added another member to its network, revealing Victorian-based Aurora Travel is now on board.

"Judy Tanner and her team (pictured) have a wealth of experience in high end leisure and corporate travel and are a

very welcome addition to the CT Partners group," GM, Supplier Partnerships Nicole Boyer said.

Aurora adds to an impressive list of agencies joining CT Partners in the last 12 months, growing the network by more than 45% in 2021 alone to 28 members.

Intrepid earns stamp

INTREPID Travel has recertified its status as the world's largest B Corporation travel company.

After undergoing a lengthy external audit of its operations, the operator earned a score of 91.2 from the B Corp Impact Assessment panel, an increase from its 2018 score of 82.7, and a result the operator said demonstrated its ongoing commitment to be a purpose-led travel business, adding the certification delineates Intrepid from the ubiquitous greenwashing in the industry.

"To become a B Corp, a company must submit to a rigorous independent assessment of its entire business to ensure it...meets the highest standards," the company's CEO James Thornton said.



AROUND HALF OF VIC EVENTS ARE IN DOUBT

CLOSE to half of all events organisers in Victoria say they anticipate cancelling an event between now and the end of Feb, according to a new survey conducted by Save Victorian Events.

While just over a quarter of the 400 respondents indicated that delaying an event was more likely than cancelling altogether, the data was still very grim reading for the state's event sector which has been previously slammed by COVID-related restrictions.

The pessimistic sentiment for the six weeks ahead is being driven by the ongoing wave of Omicron infections and

government advice to avoid large gatherings, guidance that Save Victoria Events claims is subduing the events sector just as much as previous restrictions have done.

"There is really no effective difference between a strong government health recommendation [to stay away from crowds] and a formal restriction," a spokesperson for the group said.

The same study showed that the average income for the Mar quarter for event industry businesses is forecast to the down by 68% compared to an average period before the pandemic struck, while more



broadly, event income has also been down around 80% for the duration of the COVID period.

Save Victorian Events told **BEN** the findings were an especially cruel blow to the state, which relies on the events industry for 85% of its economic activity.

In a normal year, Victorian

events would account for direct spend of more than \$12 billion.

The figures follow a Victorian Government decision late last year to launch a \$230 million scheme to underwrite insurance coverage for events in the state impacted by ongoing restrictions (**TD** 18 Nov 2021).

Cycling up north

THE inaugural Port Douglas Gran Fondo Festival will take place from 09-11 Sep, featuring a 136km cycling event designed to showcase the visitor appeal of North Queensland.

Supported by Tourism Tropical North Queensland and Tourism and Events Queensland, the sporting event will attract 5,000 cyclists and their families to the area to take part.

WA gasses up 2022

THE Australian Hydrogen Conference (West) will see 440 delegates visit Perth for the two-day event taking place in Nov, with the event anticipated to generate around \$560,000 for the West Australian economy.

"The Australian Hydrogen Conference will bring industry leaders to Perth to showcase our State's enormous opportunities in this emerging industry, helping to keep WA centre-stage in the hydrogen economy," said WA Minister for Regional Development, Agriculture and Hydrogen Industry Alannah MacTiernan.

Mardi Gras event support funding



SYDNEY Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras and Meta Australia have announced the return of the Mardi Gras Parade Viewing Events Grants program, a support initiative to assist hospitality venues and small businesses host Mardi Gras viewing events.

In light of the ongoing impact caused by the pandemic, 30 grants totalling \$100,000 will be allocated to venues across the country for the 2022 Mardi Gras Parade.

"We've witnessed the disastrous impact that two years of the pandemic has brought to entertainment

venues and queer events," Meta Australia's Director of Policy Mia Garlick said.

"We're proud to announce the return of these grants to support the arts and entertainment sectors, while also enabling people all over Australia to celebrate Mardi Gras at live, COVID-safe events," she added.

Last year's program generating more than \$300,000 across 30 grant recipients and supported events, which recorded over 7,000 attendees.

Submissions for funding closes at 11:59pm Sun 30 Jan - apply **HERE**.

Thailand gears up for fightback

THE Thailand Convention & Exhibition Bureau (TCB) has launched a bid to host a three-month Specialised Expo 2028 in Phuket.

A copy of the proposal shows a predicted 5 million people in attendance between Mar and Jun 2028, close of half of which will be international arrivals from more than 106 countries.

However, Expo 2028 Phuket is just one of three mega-events that Thailand is bidding for, with the 2026 and 2029 editions of the International Horticultural Exposition in Udon Thani and Nakhon Ratchasima also on the list of sought-after events.

"The pursuit of opportunities for Thailand to host high-profile world events such as Expo 2028 Phuket was one of TCEB's strategies for 2022 aimed at further boosting the MICE industry following Thailand's hosting of APEC Summit later this year," TCEB President Chiruit Isarangkun Na Ayuthaya said.

Air NZ's tasty trial

AIR New Zealand has been using the slower pace of demand during the pandemic to trial a range of new breakfast options.

"For our customers travelling between 20-23 Jan, we're trialling our new Economy Works and Works Deluxe breakfast meal offerings," the airline told **TD**, adding "customers can expect to taste some new delights like fresh pastries, vegetarian frittatas and breakfast wraps all served in sustainable bagasse serviceware."

The airline has flagged that by the end of Oct, the trials will enable the business to roll out a suite of modernised food options for passengers that "keep up with the preferences of today".

Seabourn extends

SEABOURN has extended its popular Book With Confidence policy through to 31 Mar.

For bookings made on sailings departing by 30 Sep, Seabourn customers can cancel up to 30 days prior to departure, or within 30 days of embarkation if they test positive for or have been directly exposed to COVID-19.

Passengers are also eligible to receive a 100% future cruise credit equal to the amount of the non-refundable portion of cancellation fees based on payment already received.

"One of the biggest ways we can help advisors and their clients right now is by recognizing they need flexibility," Seabourn said.

Whose flag is this?



PUZZLE

THIS flag bears a close resemblance to that of the United States for a good reason - the nation was founded by a group of free people of colour and formerly enslaved black people mostly from the US.

The big blue square represents

the African continent and the stripes make reference to the help the nation received from the US government and an organisation dedicated to removing free people of colour from America.

Do you know whose flag this is?

Answer: Liberia

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.

The **Flight Centre Travel Group** has appointed **Michelle Degenhardt** as its Global Sustainability Officer. In the new position she will be responsible for leading the strategic vision of the company's overarching environmental and charitable initiatives, as well as provide oversight to the Flight Centre Foundation.

Tweet World Travel Group has welcomed **Rachel Low** on board as its new Account Manager. Low will be based in Adelaide and be responsible for working closely with the brand's global clients and suppliers. She also brings more than 20 years of sales and accounts management experience to the role.

Alex Stragalinis will take on a newly created position at **Cruise Traveller**, where he will be charged with spearheading The Small Ship Collective in the local market. Before joining the company as a Business Development Manager, he had previously enjoyed a career as a performer on board Princess Cruises ships.

InterContinental Hotels Group has appointed **Deanna Oppenheimer** to the role of Chairperson, replacing Patrick Cescau who has signalled plans to retire in Aug. Oppenheimer is the Non-Executive Chair of Hargreaves Lansdown and also sits on the Board of Thomson Reuters Corporation.

Bridging a 90-year gap

ONE OF Australia's most recognisable tourism attractions is gearing up to celebrate its 90th birthday on 19 Mar, and now Australians are being asked to share some personal stories about their connection to the famous landmark.

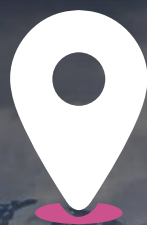
BridgeClimb, the company which run tours across the Sydney Harbour Bridge, is currently gathering feedback from Aussies about either stories or artefacts they may be in possession of for a secret project.

"Everyone has a story that involves the Sydney Harbour Bridge, whether you've scaled to the summit with us, watched it put on a spectacular New Year's Eve fireworks display, or simply taken a train ride over it, the bridge has played a part in many people's lives and we're so excited to see what we uncover throughout this process," BridgeClimb's Chief Executive Officer Deb Zimmer said.



For inspiration, BridgeClimb has supplied a few interesting tales about the bridge's varied past, including one involving elephants and a horse from a circus crossing the landmark for an unusual publicity stunt in 1932, as well as the early career of future megastar Paul Hogan (**pictured**), who worked on the bridge's maintenance team when he was 23, a job he held for more than 10 years before he was discovered as Australia's next big television star.

Submit your unique Sydney Harbour Bridge story **HERE**.



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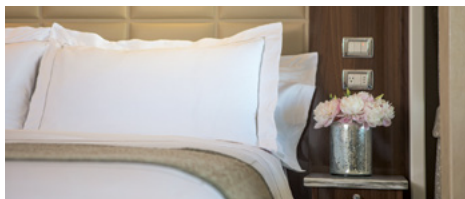


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