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Waters-Ryan exits

FLIGHT Centre's Supply CEO Melanie Waters-Ryan will step down from her role on 01 Jul 2023, citing the need to take a well-earned break after 35 years with the business.

"Mel has been a wonderful asset to our company, a role model, and an inspiration to our people and will be sorely missed," Chairman Gary Smith said - more Flight Centre news on **page two**.

Travel Daily on location in Doha, Qatar

Today's issue of *TD* is coming to you courtesy of **MSC Cruises**, which is celebrating the official naming ceremony of **MSC World Europa** in Doha.

CELEBRATIONS are well underway as guests today attend the Naming Ceremony of **MSC World Europa**.

The evening's event included entertainment from international singer-songwriter Matteo Bocelli, experiences from local artists, a cutting-edge video-mapping projection onto the ship's hull, and a huge drone show in the night sky.

The glamorous event culminated in a spectacular firework display over the Doha skyline and a gourmet gala dinner in the ship's elegant restaurants.

QR chief blasts Qantas

EXCLUSIVE

QATAR Airways CEO Akbar Al Baker has accused Qantas of "pulling the plug" on the people of Australia during the pandemic, expressing his deep frustration over the current impasse as QR seeks to boost its local capacity to double daily flights to Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and Perth.

Speaking to **TD** over the weekend in Doha during a media conference in conjunction with the naming ceremony of **MSC Cruises'** new *World Europa*, Al Baker said he was "disappointed with the pushback we are getting from the national carrier" over the issue.

"Australia is very important to us...we are here to serve the people, not only in passenger traffic, but we were also there to serve the business," he said.

Al Baker noted that Qantas took "billions of taxpayers dollars to benefit the shareholders, but it didn't benefit the taxpayer that funded that amount, and used this period to consolidate cutting costs in order for them to show that they are very profitable".

"We lost millions of dollars, because as you know very well that we were restricted from carrying passenger loads...so we were going nearly 16 hours away on an aeroplane carrying 20 to 25 passengers," Al Baker said.

"So we did a lot of sacrifices," the QR CEO fumed.

"What we are trying to do is asking for a reasonable increase to our frequencies," he added.

Al Baker hit back at accusations that QR was in violation of its existing air services agreement.

"I would like to challenge the person who's saying that we are violating any agreement that we have done with the Government of Australia...if we were violating any agreement, the authorities wouldn't allow us to do what we do," he added.

"So I hope my message to the Australian people is clear."

60 airlines show interest in Nancy

WESTERN Sydney Airport is in talks with as many as 60 airlines interested in flying to the new hub after it opens in late 2026.

Despite wet weather and the pandemic disrupting the \$5.3 billion project, Chief Executive Officer Simon Hickey said construction of SWZ remains "on time and on budget".

A massive roof will be installed for SWZ's terminal early in the new year, *The Sydney Morning Herald* reported, while the first of multiple pours of concrete for the 3.7-kilometre runway is due to start before Christmas.

Residents near the curfew-free airport are due to be consulted on draft flight paths next year.

Shareholders vote for Apollo merger

APOLLO shareholders have voted in favour of the long-awaited proposed merger with New Zealand-based Tourism Holdings Limited (**TD** 26 Oct) by way of a scheme of arrangement.

Almost all shareholders were in favour of the scheme, which remains subject to approval by the Supreme Court of Queensland, completion of the divestment to Jucy, and the satisfaction of other conditions.

Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today features five pages of news.

Intrepid tech guru

INTREPID Travel has announced the appointment of Anu Karunatilaka in the new role of Chief Technology Officer.

Karunatilaka will be based in Colorado but will make regular trips to Melbourne as he steers the company's global digital transformation, and implements Intrepid's 2025 Digital Transformation Strategy.

Karunatilaka has worked at Intrepid since 2007 in a number of roles, including as the first General Manager for Sri Lanka, and was most recently Managing Director for Asia.



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Window Seat

AN IRANIAN man who lived for 18 years in Paris' Charles de Gaulle Airport and inspired a major Hollywood film has passed away this week.

Mehran Karimi Nasserri called the airport's Terminal 1 home from 1988 until 2006, initially because of legal issues regarding his residency papers and later by choice.

Staff at the airport affectionately referred to Nasserri as Lord Alfred, becoming somewhat of a celebrity among travellers passing through, heightened by Tom Hanks playing him in the 2004 film *The Terminal*.

Comm cuts stifle margins

FLIGHT Centre has conceded that its revenue margin for the four months to 31 Oct has been adversely impacted by reduced front-end commission payments from some airlines in Australia and New Zealand.

Speaking about the company's latest financial results released this morning (*TD* breaking news), MD Graham Turner said he anticipates the changes in commissions will adversely affect overall leisure revenue margins by circa 1% in Australia.

"We are partially offsetting the impact through a combination of revenue margin improvement strategies and by securing better arrangements with those carriers who are keen to work closely with us during the recovery phase," Turner said.

Higher airfares are also eating into margins, the latest financial report revealed, especially its FCM brand which relies heavily on a fixed fees model.

Despite the challenges, Flight Centre has been able to post some encouraging financial results for the four months to 31 Oct, headlined by a significant swing to EBITDA profitability of \$61 million, up from a \$137 million loss posted in the previous

corresponding period.

Flight Centre also managed to grow its TTV to \$6.8 billion during the period, an increase of 246%, while revenue saw a similar boost, increasing by 248% to \$667 million.

The leisure arm of the business alone increased six-fold to \$3 billion, delivering an underlying EBITDA profit of \$23 million.

A diverse range of leisure channels which are "low-cost and highly scalable" have been credited with spurring growth, including its independent contractor division, which has grown to three times what it was before the pandemic.

Flight Centres' premium Travel Associates brand has also performed well, matching pre-COVID TTV in Sep and utilising only 60% of its sales network to achieve the outcome.

Meanwhile the company's Travel Money arm has exited hibernation and plans to open a 65-shop network in Australia.

Edge to return to Oz in 24/25 season

CELEBRITY Cruises has announced its 2024/25 season, which also marks the return of *Celebrity Edge* to Australia, where she will embark on a range of three- to 14-night itineraries from Oct 2024 to Apr 2025.

The first Edge Series ship will also sail to Alaska from Seattle for the first time, taking guests on seven-night journeys to the Endicott Arm Fjord and Dawes Glacier, while the newly launched *Celebrity Apex* will replace *Silhouette* with itineraries to Scandinavia.

The upcoming season will also see the cruise line's newest ship, *Celebrity Ascent*, kick off its inaugural European season in 2024, for which it will homeport in Barcelona and Rome to offer sailings to Spain, France, Italy and Greece.

More details in tomorrow's *CW*.

NRMA Parks buys

NRMA Parks and Resorts has taken ownership of Cape Hillsborough Nature Tourist Park in Queensland, marking its 11th property in Queensland and 40th holiday park in the country.

Situated on the beach in the Cape Hillsborough National Park near Mackay, the holiday park offers access to outdoor activities like hiking, fishing and kayaking.

While the current branding will remain the same for now, NRMA Parks and Resorts plans to add new accommodation options and destination experiences to the site, such as guided tours, as part of a three-year master plan.

We got it wrong

AUSTRALIAN Passport Office (APO) Executive Director Bridget Brill admitted to Senate Estimates last week the government agency's modelling had underestimated the surge in passport applications submitted once travel restrictions were finally eased.

"Unfortunately, the surge in travel, the wish to travel internationally, far exceeded anyone's expectations around the timing of that," she said, adding that around Apr to May was the period where demand far exceeded what the APO had modelled across its scenarios.

Before the pandemic, the APO processed around 7,000 applications a day, but once borders reopened, numbers soared to around 15,000 a day.

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BAC reveals terminal plan

THE Brisbane Airport Corporation (BAC) has announced plans to construct a third terminal at Brisbane Airport to cater for a predicted rise in travel demand in the run up to the 2032 Brisbane Olympic Games.

The preliminary planning phase has already kicked off, with BAC confirming it is now consulting with airline partners about the shape of a future Terminal 3, which will help Queensland's biggest air hub process the 50 million passengers forecast to travel through its terminals each year from 2040.

"We are running out of terminal capacity and we're looking at the best location, together with our airline partners, for where that new terminal will go," BAC CEO Gert-Jan de Graaff said.

"We need more domestic capacity to cater for demand so a few of our domestic airlines will likely go into Terminal 3 and we might even allocate some

international traffic in there as well to provide for better connectivity between domestic and international flights."

The likely location of the third terminal will be in between the two runways because the position will minimise the amount of aircraft taxiing required to the current domestic terminal.

Billed by the BAC as being a "state-of-the-art terminal built for the 2030s", sustainability and accessibility will be at the forefront of any design plans.

The latest announcement follows a recent funding pledge to upgrade existing airport infrastructure so that Brisbane can effectively accommodate the upswing in traffic created by the 2032 Olympics (**TD** 12 Oct), which will include \$5 billion over the next 10 years to upgrade terminals, build extra car parking, develop a regional aeromedical hub, expand Skygate, as well as build more freight facilities.

No limits for Julie

JULIE Jones, founder of Australia's only disability-specific travel magazine, *Travel Without Limits*, and her son Braeden have been named as joint ambassadors for International Day of People with Disability (IDPWD).

"One in five Australians live with a disability," Jones explained, "we want to bust the myth that they can't take adventures or explore the world".

The accessibility advocate said being ambassadors for IDPWD, which takes place 03 Dec, will give her and Braeden the chance to "spread that message further".



Elenium modernises Leeds Bradford

LEEDS Bradford Airport has signed a deal with Australian company Elenium to install 14 self-service kiosks, four self-service check-in e-gates, and a number of hybrid self-service automated bag drops.

It is the first step in Leeds Bradford's long-term plan to modernise its existing terminal through a major upgrade of check-in Hall A.

Fourteen traditional manned check-in desks will also be installed, and the hall will also be extensively refurbished.

Last chance Miles

IT IS the last day to sign up to Cathay Pacific's loyalty program for a chance to share in 600,000 bonus Asia Miles.

Three lucky winners will each receive 200,000 Miles.

To enter, join Cathay before 11.59pm AEDT tonight.

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CANADA



Kids weigh in on travel



KIDS TALK

FLIGHT Centre's new Kids Talk video series aired live on YouTube on Fri, with more episodes to follow each week.

In the series, little Aussies answer big questions from Flight Centre about their views on travel and holidays, giving candid and often hilarious responses.

"The idea for the shoot was to capture the innocent and wonderfully simple view children have of the world," said Flight Centre Videographer Marty

Watego, who shot and produced the video series.

"Travel is about having fun and quite often we overcomplicate it...to take a step back and look at it all through a child's point of view makes you appreciate the simple things about travel a whole lot more," he added.

You can view the video [HERE](#).

737 becomes Airbnb

AN EX-OZJET Boeing 737 will become luxury Airbnb accommodation, after its Australian owners won a comp run to fund unique rental properties (**TD** 20 Oct).

The Perth-based aircraft will turn into a four-person capacity Airbnb with two bedrooms and an outdoor patio, located at White Gum Air Park.

The owners bought two of the former OzJet aircraft in 2017.

Ryanair distribution

RYANAIR and Amadeus have announced a new distribution partnership this week.

From the end of the year, Ryanair flights will be able to be booked through the Amadeus Travel Platform.

The partnership will help support Ryanair's visibility goals.

MSC's World Europa arrives

MSC Cruises has introduced "the future of cruising" with the official launch of *MSC World Europa* in Doha.

The cruise line's newest flagship was officially named on the weekend during a traditional maritime ceremony, in the presence of distinguished guests, international media, and agents from around the world, including a large contingent from Australia.

Captain Marco Massa and guests, including partners from Qatar Airways, were also in attendance at the ceremony which took place at the new Grand Cruise Terminal in Doha.

Hosted by comedian Hamad Al-Amari, event guests from around the world were treated to experiences from local artists, a video-mapping projection onto *World Europa's* hull, a huge drone show, and a performance by international singer-songwriter Matteo Bocelli, the son of famous Italian tenor Andrea.

The night culminated in a

spectacular fireworks show and gala dinner on board the ship.

The LNG-powered *World Europa* has a host of sustainability features, and also forms and also forms part of the line's commitment to more tourism in the Persian Gulf.

TripADeal campaign

QANTAS' online travel agency, TripADeal, has launched a new multi-channel campaign today to increase brand awareness among Australians.

The television ad for 'Make your next holiday the G.O.A.T. (Greatest of All Trips)' follows Bobby the goat on his travels across Turkey, Greece, South Africa and Japan.

Travel Daily

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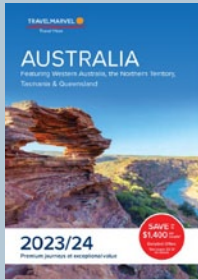
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*Selected sailings in Q1 2023. T&Cs apply.



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.



Travelmarvel - Australia 2023/24

The latest brochure from Travelmarvel features land and rail journeys showcasing the best of Australia, from the beaches of the west coast and the unspoiled landscapes of the Kimberley and the Top End, to the reefs of tropical North Queensland, the iconic Red Centre, and the pristine Tasmanian wilderness. For example, the Perth return 14-day Wonders of the South West itinerary includes a visit to the gourmet region of Margaret River, a wildlife cruise on Shark Bay, a trip to the National Anzac Centre in Albany, and an exclusive factory tour at Gabriel Chocolates.



A-ROSA - Changing European River Cruises 2023

A-ROSA's new brochure encompasses all itineraries for the cruise line's 13-ship fleet for the coming season, ranging from four- to 18-night cruises on Europe's most iconic rivers, including Rhine/Main/Moselle, Danube, Douro, Rhone/Soane and Seine. Travellers can choose from a romantic sailing along the Rhine valley, a charming Christmas market departure, a Danube cruise visiting capitals such as Vienna and Budapest, and more. The brochure includes supplementary information on the rivers as well as features of the ships, and insights into the brand including its focus on wellbeing.

Catching up with Ricky



EMIRATES joined forces with former Australian cricket captain Ricky Ponting to host a game of "backyard cricket" this week at the Melbourne Cricket Ground to kick off men's mental health month, Movember.

The Emirates cricket clinic gave a group of cricket fans the opportunity to meet one of their cricketing heroes and experience a once-in-lifetime coaching session with Ponting, who shared also shared some tips and tricks.

Each of the 11 fans who participated in the friendly

match has a connection to the Movember cause, including mental health advocates, cancer survivors and long-standing fundraisers who have had a major impact on the charity.

"As an advocate for men's mental health, it's great to see a sponsor like Emirates so invested in major sporting events and creating special moments like these to give back to some incredibly deserving individuals," Ponting said.

China eases rules

CHINA has announced plans to cut quarantine for travellers and COVID-19 close contacts from seven to five days at a hotel or government quarantine facility, but with three further days of home isolation still required.

The country's "circuit breaker" mechanism, which penalised airlines for bringing COVID-19 cases into the country by suspending inbound routes for up to two weeks, will be also scrapped, and passengers will only need one pre-departure PCR test instead of two.

Korean adds flights

KOREAN Air will add flights to Japan, China, and Israel after a long COVID-induced hiatus.

KE will resume services to Sapporo and Okinawa in Japan; Shanghai, Nanjing, and Qingdao in China; and Tel Aviv in Israel, starting from Sun.

The airline will also fly to Sapporo daily and Okinawa four times per week from Dec, while KE's Tel Aviv route will fly from Boxing Day three times per week.

Meanwhile, the carrier will fly to Shanghai and Qingdao each Sun from 20 Nov and 11 Dec.

G20 disruptions

DFAT is advising Australians travellers to Indonesia to be aware that some restrictions and disruptions may take place during the G20 held in Nusa Dua, Bali

The event will run until 18 Nov, with the advice recommending visitors check their latest visa, entry and vaccination requirements with their travel provider or nearest Indonesian Embassy or Consulate before travel - **CLICK HERE** to read the full travel advice.

Escape with Aircalin

AIRCALIN'S Escape to New Caledonia sale kicked off last Fri, with fares being offered from as low as \$599 return.

The sale will end this Fri, with the sub-\$600 ticket prices available from Sydney & Brisbane.

A range of dates for both departures cities are available through to Oct, and prices include all taxes, but are subject to availability.