

## Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today features five pages of news.

### Douglas weighs in

A SENIOR lecturer in aviation at UNSW has criticised Garuda Indonesia's recent submission to the IASC supporting a codeshare deal with Qantas to operate flights between Indonesia and Australia (TD 26 Sep).

"The additional submission by Garuda offers no insight into any new competition, price reductions, or product innovations that would be of benefit to Australian consumers," Dr Ian Douglas claimed.

The aviation expert also suggested that contrary to views expressed in Qantas' submission, Garuda's fleet is recovering and has sufficient aircraft to increase services between Jakarta and the east coast of Australia in 2024.

### TA China specialist

TOURISM Australia has appointed Nick Henderson to the role of Country Manager for China, reporting into the tourism body's Executive General Manager Eastern Markets and Aviation, Andrew Hogg.

Henderson starts the position in Jan and will be based in TA's Shanghai office, bringing with him 25 years' experience working in the Chinese market.

Former roles include being the Deputy Commissioner to Greater China for the Victorian Govt over the past three years.

## Airbnb hit with \$15m fine

THE Federal Court has ordered Airbnb to pay \$15 million in penalties after it was found guilty of misleading customers about accommodation prices.

Action was launched by the ACCC last year (TD 08 Jun 2022), which at the time accused the digital platform of making false representations to Australian users between Jan 2018 and Aug 2021 relating to the omission of US dollar displays for Australian-based properties on its site.

In a statement released late yesterday, the ACCC said about 70,000 Australian consumers were duped into thinking they were paying for listings in Aussie dollars, when in fact accounts were being debited to the tune of the much stronger US dollar.

Airbnb has also offered to pay up to \$15 million in compensation for eligible customers.

During court proceedings, Airbnb admitted to the deceptive conduct, which led to around 2,000 complaints from Aussies.

"By paying in US dollars, these consumers were charged more than they expected to pay and were deprived of a chance to make an informed decision about whether to make the booking because of this misleading conduct," the ACCC's Chair Gina Cass-Gottlieb observed.

"We took this case to send a strong signal to large digital platforms like Airbnb that they must comply with the Australian Consumer Law and not mislead



consumers and we are pleased with the undertaking by Airbnb to pay compensation," she added.

Despite copping to misleading consumers in court, Airbnb appeared to obfuscate taking full responsibility in its statement following the ruling.

"It is important to note that the final payment amount clearly displayed the applicable currency code, including in USD, at the point at which guests confirmed they wanted to proceed with the booking," Airbnb said.

Eligible consumers will be contacted by Airbnb within the next 45 days and invited to lodge a claim, but they can also contact the company directly to enquire about compensation.

Airbnb has also been ordered to pay part of the ACCC's costs and establish an Australian Consumer Law compliance program. AB

### Outrigger 25% deal

OUTRIGGER Resorts and Hotels is offering 25% discounts at its newly refurbished Outrigger Fiji Beach Resort, as part of its Bula Sales promotion.

Bookings for the deal lead in from FJ\$379 per night for travel dates until 31 Mar 2025, while Outrigger is also giving free meals for families at Castaway Island.

## Intrepid shuts lodge

INTREPID Travel has been forced to cancel all stays and pause operations until at least 01 Mar at its Daintree Ecolodge in Qld due to severe flooding caused by Cyclone Jasper.

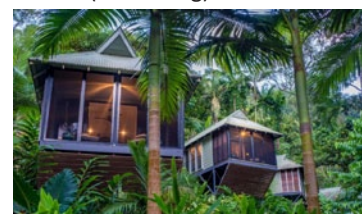
Initial survey reports at the property showed that while there is no damage to the structure itself, flood waters have impacted the second-level canopy rooms and the restaurant on the ground floor - the latter of which will require a full refit of equipment.

Intrepid also confirmed three Rainforest Rooms were completely submerged in the floods, which will need rewiring and plastering and a full replacement of furnishings to once again receive guests.

Complicating things further have been landslides along access roads to the Ecolodge, compromising guest safety.

"Within two months of operating the Daintree Ecolodge, we had already put in place an Emergency Management Plan for cyclones, meaning we were prepared to respond quickly," MD ANZ Brett Mitchell said.

It is bad timing for the tour operator, which only purchased the four-star boutique rainforest retreat four months ago for \$5 million (TD 28 Aug).








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## Carriers are careless: ACCC

A LOW level of competition in Australia's domestic airline market has led to complacency from carriers when it comes to providing acceptable levels of customer service, the ACCC has claimed in a submission to the Federal Government's *Aviation Green Paper*.

"The lack of viable alternatives and reliance on air travel due to Australia's geography means there is less choice for

customers," the consumer watchdog said.

"This reduces the incentive for the airlines to invest in systems and measures that would provide high-quality customer service."

The ACCC also claimed a lack of effective mechanisms for consumers to resolve disputes and enforce their consumer guarantee rights had led to a "dramatic increase" in consumers contacting regulators.

To combat the worrying trend, the ACCC is calling on the govt to enforce civil penalties when an airline fails to provide a remedy to consumers when they are legally required to do so under Australian Consumer Law, as well as a targeted and fit-for-purpose compensation scheme for delayed or cancelled flights.

The ACCC also threw its weight behind an independent airline ombuds scheme. *AB*

## A220 touches down

**QANTAS'** highly anticipated first QantasLink Airbus A220 aircraft landed in Sydney today, marking the next phase in the airline's fleet renewal program.

The jet is the first of 29 A220s that will be delivered to QantasLink as part of the company's broader domestic fleet renewal program, with a further 36 widebody aircraft also on order to complete the reinvigoration initiative.

Passengers will benefit from the new aircraft in a number of ways, but namely via the A220s having double the range of the outgoing Boeing 717s in the Qantas fleet, providing the valuable ability for non-stop flights between any two points in Australia.

"This arrival marks the start of the biggest domestic fleet renewal program in our history as the Group takes delivery of one new aircraft every three weeks on average over the next few years," QF CEO Vanessa Hudson said.

## Club Med record

**CLUB Med's** mountain resorts are poised for a record-breaking winter season in bookings from travellers in the Asia Pacific.

The business volumes of APAC markets has surged by 107% compared to the winter period last year, and even eclipsed pre-pandemic levels by 22%.

The strong growth is being attributed to recently added capacity in the form of Club Med Kiroro Peak, Club Med Kiroro Grand, Club Med Changbaishan, and Club Med Tignes.

## Resetting the relationship



**THERE** are promising signs the relationship between Qantas and the travel trade is moving toward a more positive track, with the Australian Travel Industry Association's (ATIA) board hosted by the carrier's Chief Executive Officer Vanessa Hudson and senior executives this week.

The forum represented the first time a Qantas CEO had met with the ATIA board in more than 10 years, with discussions covering the changing nature of distribution such as NDC, codeshares, as well as the benefits generated for both Qantas and ATIA members through a stronger relationship.

"The meeting...speaks very positively to a renewed era of cooperation and openness," Long enthused, adding that it was key to have a shared vision for the mutual success of the industry with a major carrier like Qantas.

"Increasing engagement between the travel ecosystem and Qantas will hopefully lead to better outcomes for trade, travelling Australians, as well as the many international visitors who choose to come to Australia," Long observed.

"It is imperative that we acknowledge and respect that we will not always agree on all points, but that we share a responsibility to support Australians and our visitors and the avenues in which they choose to book their travel."

ATIA also confirmed that as a result of the meeting, it has been agreed that regular ongoing dialogues between ATIA and the new Qantas executive will take place to address key concerns and issues facing the trade.

"The desired outcomes from these regular dialogues is that ATIA and Qantas can identify and solve pain points in systems, services which limit the efficiency and effectiveness for all parties," Long said.

ATIA's Chair Tom Manwaring and CEO Dean Long are **pictured** attending the meeting, along with directors David Greenland, David Smith, Cinzia Burnes, Dennis Alysandratos, James Kavanagh, and Dave Hosking and Qantas CEO Hudson, International and Freight CEO Cam Wallace, Domestic chief Markus Svennsson, & Executive Manager ANZ Stephen Thompson. *AB*

# Merry Christmas & Happy New Year

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## It's not choice bro

AIR New Zealand has revealed a disturbing rise in the number of passengers behaving badly.

In a statement released yesterday, the carrier's Chief Operational Integrity and Safety Officer, David Morgan, said there had been nearly 200 reports a month of "unacceptable customer behaviour" over the last 12 months.

Complaints made against customers have included people refusing to follow instructions from cabin crew and some being verbally and physically abusive.

"We have zero-tolerance for such behaviour and will take action to ensure that abusive customers are no longer able to travel with us if needed to ensure the safety of our team and customers," Morgan said.

## Daring Scoot heist

A MAN has been charged with theft after allegedly stealing more than \$23,000 in cash from three passengers while aboard a Scoot flight from Vietnam to Singapore.

A 52-year-old Chinese national has been charged in Singapore with allegedly sifting through passengers' bags during the flight and stealing wads of money.

## A Xmas beyond in Adelaide



THE Journey Beyond team recently held its Christmas party at the Adelaide Showgrounds, where close to 500 invited guests donned their most vibrant holiday colours to celebrate the occasion.

Party-goers enjoyed pre-drinks on the lawns, a special awards dinner inspired by the company's experiences Under the Milky Way, as well as an exuberant after-party hoe-down hosted in the 'Cattle Barn'.

**Pictured:** A contingent of the Journey Beyond party raise a glass to the festive season.

## Virgin off the pace

VIRGIN Australia has continued its run of poor schedule performances in recent months, with the carrier trailing the field of Aussie airlines in Nov across both timings and cancellations.

The carrier recorded the highest percentage of cancellations at 6.3%, well above the industry average of 3.7% for the month, and behind all its major rivals.

Bonza, which has finally been admitted to the monthly BITRE Domestic On Time Performance report, was the next worst offender, scrapping 4.2% of flights from its schedule.

Leading the pack for Nov was Rex Airlines, which only had to cancel a meagre 0.9% of services.

Jetstar achieved the highest on time arrivals among the 'major' domestic airlines at 67.8%, followed by Qantas at 62.5% and Virgin Australia at 54.2%.

On time performance over all routes averaged 64.1% for arrivals and 65.9% for departures - significantly lower than the long-term average of 81.6%.

The report also showed that the Adelaide-Port Lincoln route had the highest percentage of on time arrivals, while the poorest performed route was Melbourne-Darwin, only achieving a quarter of its flights on time.



## Window Seat

THE final frontier of space travel achieved a major milestone this week, with NASA confirming it was able to use state-of-the-art laser communications on a spaceship 19 million miles away to broadcast an HD cat video.

While the 15-second 'meow-vie' starring an orange tabby called Taters may appear trivial to most observers, the furry communique demonstrated that it was possible to transmit high-data-rate transmissions needed to one day support sending a traveller to Mars.

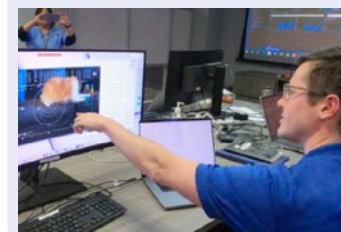
"One of the goals is to demonstrate the ability to transmit broadband video across millions of miles," NASA said, adding that to make this significant event more memorable, the space agency decided to work with designers to create "a fun video" that people will remember.

So why a cat video in particular, we hear you ask?

Great question, as it turns out the feline influencer actually has historical significance, with Felix the Cat used back in the 1920s to broadcast one of the first test images for television.

The successful (and quite cute) technology demonstration is so precise that it even needs to compensate for the fact that in the time it takes for light to travel from the spacecraft to Earth, both the probe and the planet will have moved - so the uplink and downlink lasers need to adjust for the change.

That's some pretty sophisticated tech, isn't it.



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## NEW CHIEF FOR ADELAIDE VENUES

**ADELAIDE** Venue Management (AVM) has announced the appointment of Martin Radcliffe (pictured) as Chief Executive Officer, effective immediately.

Radcliffe has a proven track record within the events industry, having led Adelaide Convention Centre as General Manager since May 2022 (TD 14 Apr 2022).

During his time at the helm, the centre saw a record trading year in 2022/23, and became the first in the world to be awarded the EarthCheck Master Status sustainability certification.

Radcliffe, who has been the acting CEO of AVM since Aug 2023 and also currently serves as the Chair of Adelaide Hills Tourism, was selected out of more than 100 applicants from around the world.

"While we were extremely impressed with the quality of the

applications we received, Martin's vision for the future of the business stood above all others," AVM Chair Andrew Daniels said.

"In Martin, we have an energetic and accomplished leader who understands the relationships we have nurtured, sees the opportunities in front of us and has a clear plan of how to capitalise on these and continue our growth trajectory."

AVM achieved a record financial trading profit of \$13.1 million in 2022-23, and attracted over 300,000 visitors to the state.

Radcliffe shared, "we have had some outstanding recent international events such as FIFA Women's World Cup games, the World Indigenous Peoples Conference on Education, and concerts from Paul McCartney and the Foo Fighters".

"I believe there is significant



further growth potential in positioning ourselves as a key global player to both ensure the continued strength and growth of AVM as well as the success of Adelaide and South Australia as a destination for major events.

"I'm also committed to building on our leadership in sustainability," he added.

"We will continue to invest in environmental and social initiatives to ensure our growth is responsible and considered." JM

## Aotearoa odyssey

**AROUND** 10,000 delegates from China were flown to New Zealand in 12 groups over two months between Oct-Dec for the 2023 Amway China Leadership Seminar, produced by Encore Event Technologies APAC.

Attendees were able to experience the incredible sights and experiences New Zealand has to offer via an extensive program of events and excursions.

The massive incentive group resulted in 20,000 hotel nights filled in Queenstown and Auckland, injecting around NZ\$40 million into the economy.

The event highlight was a final gala night dinner, which was staged 15 times throughout the period to visitor groups of around 600.

## CCC re-opens

**EVERYTHING** is business as usual again at the Cairns Convention Centre (CCC), which temporarily closed during Cyclone Jasper in Far North Queensland.

General Manager Janet Hamilton has confirmed that the newly expanded centre did not sustain any damage, adding that the venue has been designed to withstand tropical storms, and that no future events were impacted.

## Iconic Parramatta venue transformed

**PARRAMATTA** Town Hall has reopened to the public after undergoing a 14-month, \$30 million restoration, with the venue now available to be hired for all kinds of events from early 2024.

The restored landmark now features state-of-the-art audio visual and lighting features in the main hall, a commercial prep kitchen, a passenger lift to the upper level, and a contemporary glassed-in



Southern Terrace overlooking Parramatta Square.

Dignitaries, including the City of Parramatta Lord Mayor Pierre Esber, gathered last Fri for a special civic opening and ribbon-cutting ceremony (pictured).

## Updates from ABEA

**THE** Australian Business Events Association (ABEA) has revealed plans to engage a First Nations advisor to the Board in 2024, with the announcement made during its inaugural Connect & Celebrate event last week (TD 30 Nov).

In Feb next year, the industry body is set to host the Leadership Forum at Asia Pacific Incentives and Meetings Event (AIME) 2024 in Melbourne, and will announce an emerging leader challenge shortly, with the winner to present at ABEA's AIME session.

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## APPOINTMENTS

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**Jonathan Wilson** has been appointed the new Chief Executive Officer at **Arman at Sea**. The executive boasts an extensive history in the luxury hospitality and cruise sectors, bringing over 20 years of experience to the new role. He was most recently the Vice President of Customer Experience and Innovation at Hilton Worldwide and has spent over 15 years at Princess Cruises and Cunard Line in senior roles.

Adding to her expertise within the popular holiday region, **Sasha Degen** has taken on the role of Vice President at **Hunter Valley Wine & Tourism Association**. Degen is currently the owner and General Manager of the Hunter Valley Stay, and is also the Marketing Manager at Defen Vineyard Cellar Door & Vine Stay.

In light of Chris Hine's retirement as a board member from the Rex Group, **Craig Martin** has been appointed as the Chief Operating Officer for its charter division, **National Jet Express**. Martin is currently Rex's Antarctic Project Manager, where he has been instrumental in driving the Australian Antarctic Program. Martin also has experience as a Training Captain and Operational Aviation Manager.

**COMO Hotels and Resorts** has welcomed **Rory Slater** as its new Manager Director, London to oversee COMO Metropolitan London and COMO The Halkin. Starting in 08 Jan next year, Slater brings over 30 years of experience in luxury hospitality to the role, spanning the US, the UK, and Asia. He was formerly the General Manager of Estelle Manor in Oxfordshire, and will utilise his expertise to deliver, enrich and expand COMO's commitment to luxury accommodation.

Commencing in his new role in Jan 2024, **Grahma Ware** will be joining **AVIAREPS** as the newest member of its sales team. Bolstering the representation company's sales team, Ware brings an abundance of experience in the aviation and tourism industries. He will be responsible for representing the clients of Air Mauritius, Airlink, Bangkok Airways, and Rezlive.com, as well as several tourism boards.

Following a key appointment last week, **Boeing** has named **Chris Ryamond** as its President and CEO of Boeing Global Services, and **Brian Moran** as Boeing's Chief Sustainability Officer. Raymond was previously the aircraft manufacturer's VP of Sustainability, Strategy, and Corporate Development, and was most recently the chief sustainability officer, where Moran has been promoted to from his current role of VP, Global Sustainability Policy & Partnerships.

**Ethihad Airways** has appointed **Christophe Didier** to the new role of Vice President of Sales and Distribution. Bringning over 25 years of experience, Didier specialises in commercial aviation, previously excelling roles at companies like COPA Airlines. Didier will help enhance Ethihad's global presence and accomplish key growth objectives.

## A perfect splash of Xmas



**WORLD Expeditions** made quite a big splash at its Christmas party in Brisbane this week.

Employees at the touring company were invited to attend a special wellness session at the luxurious Vikisati in Brisbane, providing a distinctly healthy tinge above and beyond the traditional Christmas festivities.

**Pictured** enjoying a wellness spa are Emily Dennerstein, Manager of World Expeditions Schools; Pam Dewar, Manager of World Expeditions International; and Linda Murden, Manager for Australian Walking Holidays.

## Elevate your stay

**GUESTS** booking a 2024 Crystal cruise before 31 Jan will receive a complimentary suite upgrade and an upgraded wardrobe valet service with dry-cleaning to mark this year's Wave Season.

The promotion for the luxury A&K cruise brand can include up to a three-category upgrade.

The special promotion is only valid for new reservations made after 14 Dec 2023.

## No air delays, yet

A **VOLCANIC** eruption that occurred on Mon in the Reykjanes Peninsula north of Grindavik in Iceland has prompted DFAT to issue a warning to Aussie travellers to avoid areas near the eruption site.

Anticipation of an eruption had been growing in recent weeks (**TD 16 Nov**), with the eventual volcanic activity spewing ash and lava into the air this week.

Qantas told **Travel Daily** the natural event had so far not impacted any of its services to Europe "at this stage", but is closely monitoring the situation.

Keflavik International Airport, located approximately 10km from the volcano, also remains open and operational at full capacity, with a spokesperson for the hub stating flights are arriving and departing as scheduled.

Volcanos in Iceland have a torrid history of disrupting major flight paths to Europe, with carriers having to cancel and divert flights during major eruptions in the past because of safety protocols.