

Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today features seven pages of news including our **Corporate Update** and a photo page from **Helloworld**.

Air Vanuatu debt

LIQUIDATORS for the collapsed Air Vanuatu say the South Pacific airline owes creditors more than AUD\$110 million, with this number still expected to rise.

A statement from Ernst and Young lambasted the airline's available financial information as "significantly out of date" and that its financial position is "dire".

Investigations into Air Vanuatu's operating condition has found only two of its six planes are flight-ready, with three needing urgent work and one repossessed.

The LTC message is clear

A **CLEAR** vision for the future is one of the key reasons The Luxury Travel Collection (LTC) is receiving strong membership interest from agencies around the country.

Speaking with **TD** this week at Flight Centre Travel Group's (FCTG) inaugural Business Owners Soiree for LTC on Hayman Island, Global MD of Luxury & Independent Leisure, Danielle Galloway, said there had already been a plethora of positive feedback from new members.

"We're an incredibly open organisation with open individuals and new members coming into the organisation are telling us their biggest surprise is the huge transparency," she said.

"That relates to everything we do - from the financials through to future strategy - we just see that as part of our DNA and we have always been open and transparent in the way we operate as a business."

The LTC has already secured a prestigious line-up of foundation agencies, but as GM for the emerging luxury division, Nikki Glading, explains, it's not all about the numbers.

"LTC has been trading for six months and it's become less about me going out there to find people and more about fielding interest, because what's really important to us is that [members] align with the values with which we run this business.

"They need to have a reputation for luxury, a reputation for working well with our preferred suppliers, have the luxury traveller at the centre of everything they do...it's definitely more about quality and not about numbers," Glading observed.

While the names of the agencies are still under wraps, Glading was able to confirm that The LTC will be bringing five new members to the market in Jul, with that number to grow to 15 by Christmas and around 20 by the end of the next financial year.



However, Glading stressed that it is not a result of any specific target, but rather a figure driven by ongoing conversations with interested parties.

Part of the time taken to grow The LTC member network is also allocated to the attention to detail needed to deliver the brand message personally.

"These are high-touch advisors and businesses so we have to deliver high touch experiences for them as well - you can't rush it," Glading insisted.

Another string to the bow for The LTC is the way it differentiates itself in the expanding luxury market through its Galeries De Luxe product shelf revealed earlier this year (**TD** 23 Feb).

"Really important early on was creating a framework for LTC in order to manage the expectations of what a luxury advisor/network really wants on the product shelf," Galloway explained.

"In many other groups...you'll see it's just this huge product shelf with everything, whereas what we really wanted to do [with Galeries De Luxe] is create a framework with the luxury consumer at the centre point."

Glading is **pictured** flanked by members of the growing LTC network in Hayman Island. **AB**

HA debuts in Utah

HAWAIIAN Airlines has begun its new daily service between Honolulu and Salt Lake City, with the maiden HA84 flight arriving to a colourful gate-side welcome party in the Utah capital.

The airline will celebrate its new destination by hosting a lei stand at a local Salt Lake City shopping centre on 18 May, handing out Hawaiian leis to every visitor.

Vale Chris Fenton

THE travel industry is coming to terms with the untimely loss of Chris Fenton, who passed away earlier this week after a long battle with cancer.



Fenton, who most recently was the Sales Manager for Batik Air under CVFR Group's Airline Rep Services, was an immeasurably popular member of the wider industry and will be truly missed.

Chris' life will be celebrated on Fri 24 May at the Magnolia Chapel at Macquarie Park Cemetery, beginning at 12:15pm.

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Biggest QFF offer

QANTAS Frequent Flyer (QFF) and Woolworths' Everyday Rewards loyalty program have launched the biggest-ever points giveaway in its history.

The promotion will see 50 lucky shoppers at Woolworths, Big W and BWS share 50 million Qantas Frequent Flyer points, with each taking home one million each.

New or existing Frequent Flyers and Everyday Rewards members will have the chance to win through to the end of Jun.

Victory revived?

CRUISE entrepreneur John Waggoner is set to revive the defunct Victory Cruise Lines brand, which merged with the recently collapsed American Queen Voyages (**TD** 21 Feb).

Waggoner has bought two of the failed company's ships, which he intends to operate once again under the old Victory brand, according to *Seatrade*.

Canada's big opportunity

DESTINATION Canada has unveiled its bedrock 2030 tourism strategy under which it aims to propel itself back into the world's top seven global tourism markets.

Titled 'A World of Opportunity', the signature campaign was introduced to delegates at the annual Rendez-vous Canada marketplace in Edmonton.

By 2030, Canada is aiming to generate up to CAD\$160 billion (AUD\$176b) in annual revenue.

According to The World Economic Forum's Travel and Tourism Development Index, which measures the contribution of tourism in over 100 countries, Canada's global competitiveness has gradually declined since 2009 to its current position of 13th.

Visitation numbers to Canada from Australia hit 72% of 2019 levels last year, with spend levels for 2023 already above pre-COVID.

Destination Canada Australia Managing Director, Julie King,



said buyers at Rendez-vous are extremely optimistic about their sales to Canada moving forward.

"We are forecast to reach 124% of 2019 visitor numbers in 2025 and long-term, Australia is projected to be one of the fastest growing markets for Canada."

Key pillars of Canada's strategy include destination development and working with local communities to identify critical tourism infrastructure; expanding access to data and intelligence and showcasing sustainability in the Destination Canada brand.

The organisation will also devise ways to geographically disperse guests throughout the country and create local opportunities. *ML*

P&O axes Noumea

P&O Cruises Australia's *Pacific Adventure* will no longer call Lifou or Noumea in New Caledonia, with the ship to instead spend an additional day at Mystery Island.

New Caledonia declared a state of emergency earlier this week due to unrest in the country (**TD** yesterday), with P&O Australia continuing to closely monitor the situation in Noumea and surrounding areas.

"The safety of our guests and crew is paramount," a statement from P&O Cruises said.

P&O Australia's sister brand, Carnival Cruise Line, has also revised its itinerary for *Carnival Splendor's* South Pacific voyage, which is set to depart on Sun.

The cruise will instead include stops at Santo and Vila instead of its scheduled call in Noumea.

A Carnival spokesperson said the cruise line is continuing to monitor the situation, and will keep guests booked on future voyages to the country informed.



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TRIBE New Zealand

ACCOR is preparing to launch its midscale brand, Tribe, in New Zealand, with Tribe Auckland Fort Street set to open its doors later this year.

Located close to the Commercial Bay Precinct, the property will offer 60 guestrooms along with a lobby bar, terrace and social hub.

Australians spend big

AUSSIE tourists are the biggest spenders in the world when it comes to experiences and nightlife, according to new data from Mastercard Economics Institute (MEI)'s annual report.

The *Travel Trends 2024: Breaking Boundaries* report reveals Australians are spending one of every five dollars (19%) on these activities in 2024, which is significantly higher than the global average (12%).

When it comes to the spending habits of overseas visitors in Australia, the report revealed that splurging on fine dining is up nearly 49% compared to the same time last year, while shopping on luxury apparel has seen a 40% increase.

Australia ranked as the seventh top destination for travel globally

in the past year, with foreign travellers staying an average of 5.4 days - up 0.6 days versus 2019.

Japan is the number one trending destination worldwide, while overall, APAC passenger traffic is enjoying a strong rebound, especially for shorter, intra-regional trips. *JM*

Google shaking AI

GOOGLE has revealed it is working on 'Project Astra', a real-time, multimodal AI assistant that promises to make previous versions look "primitive".

Astra will be able to perceive its surroundings, identify objects, remember users' locations, and assist with various everyday tasks.

Mirage cashes out

AN ICON of the Las Vegas strip will close its doors permanently on 17 Jul, with The Mirage set to end 30 years on Las Vegas Blvd ahead of a major transformation.

The property will become Hard Rock Las Vegas, which will see the removal of its iconic volcano, as it morphs into an enormous 213-metre high guitar-shaped hotel (pictured), opening in 2027.



Over its three decades, The Mirage has played host to many famous Las Vegas acts including several Cirque du Soleil acts as well as Siegfried and Roy's iconic illusion show in the 1990s.

Hard Rock acquired The Mirage from MGM Resorts International for US\$1.07 billion in late 2021 (*TD* 15 Dec 2021).

Down Under evolves

AAT Kings' Down Under Tours has unveiled a brand revamp, which aims to highlight it as a premium touring and coach transport provider across Cairns and Tropical North Queensland.

Marking Down Under Tours' first significant design update since 2007, the refresh includes a new logo design, fresh marketing assets, updated uniforms, and new coach livery.

Industry partners attending the Australian Tourism Exchange 2024 starting this Sun can visit the Down Under Tours booth to learn more about the brand evolution.

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Railbookers' luxury rail flying



INSATIABLE demand for luxury and the support of a plethora of wholesalers and tour operators has been among the key drivers for Golden Eagle Luxury Trains to again have a full-time sales manager in the Australian market. "We've seen rail travel just blow off the charts - everything is about trains now, and luxury trains are really getting to the

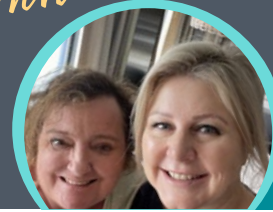
forefront of people's attention," said Golden Eagle Sales Manager Australia, Megan Bardsley.

Backed by a roster of luxury wholesalers and tour operators, Bardsley said these days, the train itself is the destination and coupled with stunning scenery, the romance of rail is alive and well.

Bardsley is **pictured** above with Railbookers BDM, Craig Owens.

The Chat

with Jenny



Travel Daily

A conversation with Michelle Ashcroft

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Bali gets connected

TRAVELLERS working remotely in Bali will soon enjoy greater connectivity, as Indonesia prepares to roll out Elon Musk's high-speed broadband satellite internet service, Starlink, across the country on 19 May.

The launch is part of Indonesia's commitment to improve its connectivity infrastructure nationwide, and will especially benefit remote regions where wifi service lags behind.

SQ's record profits

SINGAPORE Airlines has announced its employees will receive a bonus equivalent to eight months of their salary, after the Group achieved a record annual profit of S\$2.67 billion (A\$2.97 billion) for 2023-24.

The profit represents a 24% increase compared to the previous year, with SIA and Scoot collectively carrying 37.6% more passengers year-on-year.



Window Seat

THE old adage that 'courtesy will never lead you astray' may apply to artificial intelligence.

Researchers at Waseda University in Tokyo have found politeness, encouragement and flattery delivered better results from Chatbot prompts.

Similarly, telling AI their work was critical to your job or to take pride in its effort often led to improved performances.

The method, which was dubbed 'EmotionPrompt' found a 115% improvement on accuracy and usefulness, finding chatbots are sensitive and performances are strongly related to human behaviour.

The study concluded that Chatbots "possess emotional intelligence and can be enhanced by emotional stimuli".



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Helloworld OMC hits all the right notes

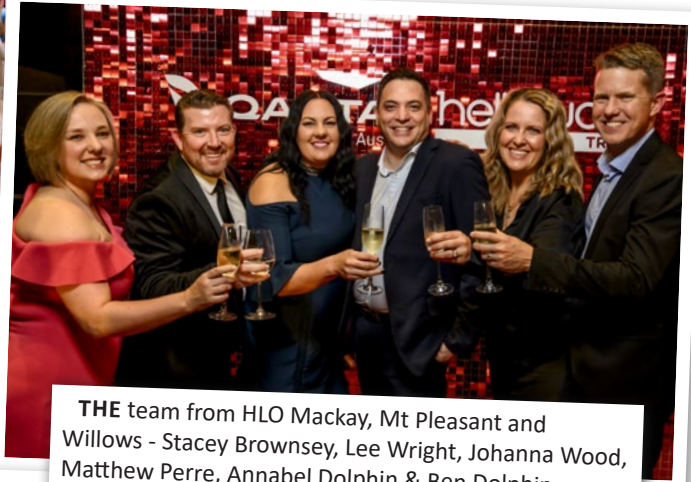
WITH over 550 attendees, Helloworld's annual Owner Managers Conference concluded in style with a gala dinner sponsored by Qantas held at the Overseas Passenger Terminal in Sydney.

Guests were treated to an exclusive event as the space was transformed for the evening, with delegates surprised and delighted by the famous Qantas girls choir as the opening entertainment.

After the meal, the dancefloor beckoned as delegates enjoyed the band and danced the night away.



THE Qantas Choir.



THE team from HLO Mackay, Mt Pleasant and Willows - Stacey Brownsey, Lee Wright, Johanna Wood, Matthew Perre, Annabel Dolphin & Ben Dolphin.



A SPECTACULAR setting for dinner.



SANDRA Paddick, HLO Kadina; Tracy Hannam, HLO Mt Barker; Kim Gibson, HLO Blackwood; Michelle Henderson, HLO Tea Tree Plaza; and Barbara Hunt, HLO Pt Augusta.



PHIL Hoffmann, Tania Bakos, Alex Pickering, and Alison Hoffmann from Phil Hoffmann Travel



DAVID Hosking, TTC; Sarah Gerrand, HLO; Cinzia Burnes, HLO; and Brett Dann, Hunter Travel Group.



DEBRA Carr, HLO Surrey Hills & Janene Ferguson, HLO South Melbourne.



CHANTALL Barnes, Deniltquin Travel; Tania Botha, Temora Travel; Zaia Bazi, Jetaround Travel; Rebecca Hausler, Temora Travel; and Sonya Prior, Travel Menai Metro.



JOHN Davidson & Karen Way, HLO Alexander Heights.



DINING in style with the Flying Kangaroo.

CORPORATE UPDATE

CWT's Special Assistance

GLOBAL business travel and meetings solutions provider, CWT, has introduced a special assistance service to ensure an accessible and equal experience for travellers with disabilities.

The new offering includes airport and airline services including TSA Cares, service animal reservations, multi-sensory rooms, and fast-track immigration.

Customers can also take advantage of train and station special service requests, including wheelchair assistance, as well as suitable hotel accommodation such as rooms with reduced mobility facilities.

Travellers using Special Assistance can access a dedicated team of 'travel counsellors', who have undergone training to enhance skills such as empathy and awareness, avoiding ableist language, and building trust to

reduce the anxiety experienced by many travellers.

"At CWT, we believe that all business travellers should have a seamless and comfortable experience, regardless of their individual needs," said Stephanie Lewis, Director of Service Design.

"With this new service, we are highly equipped to provide access to specialised support to travellers with visible and non-visible disabilities, empowering them to travel for work with confidence."

The Special Assistance service is currently available in more than 20 countries, and will be rolled out globally by year-end. *JM*

BCD thinks forward

FOLLOWING two years of rapid growth, BCD Meetings and Events has unveiled a three-year strategic plan that aims to "guide innovation solutions for an evolving, sustainable future".

Thinking Forward focuses on the three key areas of engagement, creativity, and growth, with an emphasis on caring for culture, community, and planet.

Global President Bruce Morgan said, "our clients can expect a more collaborative, personalised partnership with enhanced flexibility of services and increased efficiencies across the globe".

"We're making significant investments in technology and areas like sustainability, which... [are] critical components of the future of meetings and events."

Philippines travel up

FLIGHT Centre Corporate has welcomed Qantas' move to launch four times weekly direct flights between Brisbane and the Philippines in Oct.

"The Philippines has become an increasingly important destination for businesses," said Melissa Elf, Global COO/ANZ MD.

FCM and Corporate Traveller, Flight Centre Corporate's flagship brands, saw a 34% increase in bookings to the Philippines between Jan-Apr 2024, compared to the same period last year.

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Japan hotels tap into Sabre



HOTEL Management Japan has signed a new agreement with Sabre Corporation to improve its connectivity to travel agents and travel management companies around the world.

The hotel operator, which manages 22 properties throughout Japan, will implement Sabre Hospitality's cloud-based commerce and distribution platform, SynXis, across its own brands, including Oriental Hotels and Resorts.

Additionally, Hotel Management Japan will also tap into Sabre Hospitality's Channel Connect to streamline and automate inventory distribution to global Online Travel Agency channels from a single distribution point.

"Our new collaboration with Sabre represents a significant advancement in our dedication to delivering exceptional guest

experiences while maximising our revenue opportunities," said Junichi Araki, COO, Hotel Management Japan.

"By opting for Sabre's advanced technology, we are confident in our ability to reach a broader audience, improve operational efficiencies and, ultimately, enhance our position in the competitive Japanese and global hospitality industry." *JM*

Go for gold with VA

VIRGIN Australia is enticing business flyers to make the switch to its rewards program, with a promise to match those who hold Gold or Platinum status on a non-partner airline.

New sign-ups will enjoy Pilot Gold Velocity Status for three months when they apply by 30 Jun - more details [HERE](#).




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Brighton agents chalk up 55



THRIVING, not just surviving, in the face of challenges large and small has been key to success for Brighton Travelworld, which this week chalked up an astonishing 55 years in business.

The Victorian agency recently brought together its most loyal clients, valued suppliers and industry partners to celebrate the milestone with an intimate but memorable soiree.

Led by co-owners Julie Avery and Keiran Cromie, Brighton Travelworld has weathered global financial crises, a pandemic and the daily challenge of remaining profitable in the face of falling supplier commissions.

Adapting to a changing clientele has also been an ongoing hurdle as travellers became more savvy online and walk through the doors armed with information.

Despite this, the comfort in using an experienced and trustworthy advisor to manage their bookings must never be understated.

But perhaps the biggest secret to its success, according to Avery, is to always provide great service and match clients to the right

product at the right time.

"COVID taught the public that there is immense value in booking through an agent and the breadth of suppliers have opened up some amazing parts of the world for us to create dreams around," Avery said. *ML*

Julie is **pictured** third from left with her current team of Erica, Carol, Hazel, Lisa and co-owner, Kieran Cromie (second from right).

IHG Vietnam boost

IHG Hotels and Resorts will expand its luxury and lifestyle portfolio in Vietnam with the introduction of two new brands at both ends of the country.

In the south, the boutique Hotel Indigo Saigon The City will feature 150 rooms and all the colour and excitement of its surrounds.

Guest facilities will include a rooftop pool, fitness centre and a restaurant specialising in local and international cuisine.

Elsewhere, Vignette Collection will also make its Vietnam debut with a new property located near a UNESCO Heritage Site in Hoi An.

SPECIALS

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Virgin Australia is offering Aussie travellers discounted mid-week fares (Tue-Thu) to the Gold Coast until midnight 19 May. One-way fares start from as low as \$69 from Sydney, while travellers from Melbourne can secure their seat for as little as \$85, and fares between Canberra and the Gold Coast are available from \$89. The deal is valid for travel between 04 Jun and 12 Dec - **CLICK HERE** to book now.

Save up to 20% on a selection of **Intrepid Travel's** original small group adventures and up to 25% off its Antarctica Expeditions. Priced from \$1,929, travellers can enjoy the eight-day 'Sail Greece: Santorini to Mykonos' voyage to discover the beauty of the Greek Islands, and explore blue and white villages of Santorini. Call 1300 304 974 to take advantage of the offer today.

Oceania Cruises has announced a four-category upgrade sale on more than 60 sailings around the world throughout the 2024 and 2025 seasons. Available to book until 30 Jun, the offer allows cruisers to boost their stateroom choices from Inside to Oceanview, Oceanview to Veranda, Veranda to Concierge, or even Concierge to Penthouse Suite. Upgrade your accommodation with Oceania today on 1300 355 200.

Travellers can enjoy big savings on select **Railbookers** itineraries, including the 11-day 'Highlights of Europe', the 13-day 'The Ultimate Swiss Panorama', and the 13-day 'Venice, Florence, Sorrento, and Rome' journeys, which are now available with savings of \$700 per couple. A discount of \$600 per couple can also be enjoyed on the eight-day 'Berlin, Dresden, and Prague' itinerary. The flash sale is only available for a limited time - **CLICK HERE** to make a booking.

Score a double discount with **Uniworld Boutique River Cruises'** latest offer on select itineraries in 2025. Savings of \$500 per person are available on select eight-day cruises, or up to \$1,000 per person on longer cruises. Travellers can also save a further 10% when they pay in full at time of booking. View all of the eligible itineraries **HERE**.

For those looking for a laidback getaway, **Heyscape** in Western Australia is offering a 15% discount for stays between Sun and Thu across its tiny cabin range, which consists of premiums, classic, dog-friendly, accessible, and family options. Prices start from \$293 per night until 30 Jun, with discounts automatically applied at checkout - **CLICK HERE** to make a booking.

Cruise Traveller is offering savings and other bonuses on its 12-night 'Vegas Scenes and Mississippi Dream' voyage. The all-inclusive tour includes highlights such as visits to historic cotton plantations, Civil War battlefields, and more. Couples can save up to \$825, while solo travellers can save up to \$850 aboard the refurbished 185-guest *American Splendor*. Call 1800 507 777 for more information.