

## Today's issue of TD

*Travel Daily* today features eight pages of news, including our **Business Events News** page, plus a full page from **APT Travel**.



Today's issue of *Travel Daily* is coming to you from Adelaide, where Express Travel Group's Xchange has kicked off.

**WE CAUGHT** the flight to ETG's Xchange conference in Adelaide today and to kick things off, agents were given the option of taking part in an immersive experience.

There are tours to the Adelaide Hills, Monarto Safari Park, and the Jurlique Farm, as well as McLaren Vale.

Tonight, sponsor Viking will start a soiree to celebrate the beginning of the conference.

On Fri morning, attendees are invited to walk around the River Torrens together, before listening to presentations from speakers including ETG's Tom Manwaring and Jason Aghan, Helloworld's Anrew Burnes and plenty more.

## APT up for NTIAs

**APT** Travel Group is up for a swathe of National Travel Industry Awards once again, this year nominated in four categories.

The company has been recognised for its tours, cruises, and its reservations team - celebrate with APT on **page 9**.

# Antarctic frustrations

EXCLUSIVE

**THERE** are a lot of Antarctic specialists and wholesalers in Australia who feel frustrated by the trend toward larger vessels servicing the region, Terra Nova Expeditions founder and CEO Greg Carter has claimed.

Speaking with sister title *travelBulletin* this week, Carter asserted specialists selling expedition sailings to the region are becoming disenfranchised with the segment, as it moves, in his view, from genuine destination immersion to operating larger vessels.

"There are a lot that are begging for vessels like [Terra Nova Expeditions'] *St. Helena* who are frustrated with the larger [ship] sizes," Carter explained.

"They are also frustrated with a lot of the bigger cruise lines... which have a very different retail model to the traditional Antarctic operators, which is squeezing out the specialists with great knowledge," he added.

Reflecting on the recent launch of his new venture, Carter said he is "not out to launch a thousand ships", adding the plan for now is to grow organically.

## Aussies involved in Bali boat accident

**FIVE** Australians were among 80 passengers on a speedboat that capsized in Bali on Tue.

The vessel was travelling from Nusa Penida to Bali and flipped after being struck by large waves, killing two passengers.

None of the Australians on board were admitted to hospital, according to *Seven News*.



While the company is not aggressively looking to expand its fleet, Carter said if the opportunity arises to purchase another ship that fits the brief, Terra Nova is in a position to pull the trigger on any acquisition.

The cruise entrepreneur also revealed he is looking to bolster his team by three or four people by the end of the year, with a yet-to-be-announced Reservations Manager starting in Australia in a few weeks time.

While there will be a modest increase in head count, Carter said for now the aim was to keep operations "as lean as possible".

Terra Nova seeks to offer travellers greater immersive Antarctic sailings for those on a budget, offering a small flexible ship experience with more time spent in destination. *MS/AB*  
Read the full Q&A **HERE**.

## Collette Rallio pact

**COLLETTE** has launched additional marketing support for travel advisors through a new partnership with social content platform Rallio.

The new collaboration will provide travel advisors with access to Collette-branded social media content, including a diverse range of images and video to support the destinations to which the tour operator travels.

Content can also be uniquely customised with a user's preferred call to action.

## The north goes east

**TOURISM** partnership Kiwi North will visit Australia in Sep, bringing across 70 operators from 15 North Island regions.

The Kiwi suppliers will host trade events in Sydney and Melbourne on 02 Sep and 03 Sep respectively, presenting agents with all the latest updates from destinations such as Auckland, Waikato, the Bay of Plenty, Hawke Bay, Wellington & more.

Advisors can register there interest in attending **HERE**.

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## Sun shines on events

**THE** Sunshine Coast is set to get a boost with the update today from IHG and Felix Capital that Crowne Plaza Maroochydore will be developed on Ocean St and feature 180 guest rooms.

The project has been reimagined from a previous concept for voco Maroochydore, recognising the opportunity to deliver a hotel that can respond in particular to the region's fast-growing demand for conference and event spaces - more on **BEN**.

## Foran stabilised us: O'Brien



**OUTGOING** Air New Zealand boss Greg Foran (**pictured**) has been hailed as a "generous" leader that got the Kiwi carrier through the "most challenging period in our 85 year history", Chief Commercial Officer Jeremy O'Brien has said.

Speaking at the CAPA Airline Leader Summit in Cairns last week, O'Brien was asked what Foran, who was the CEO of Walmart in the US prior to Air New Zealand, had contributed to the national airline.

The Air NZ CCO admitted the outgoing exec joined at a challenging time, but created a stabilising force through COVID and other issues the airline faced.

"I'm sure there were days where Greg was pining for his thousand-plus stores and huge number of employees in Walmart US, because I don't think he could have envisaged the challenges he was going to face when he joined Air New Zealand," O'Brien said.

"Greg has a mantra which is 'panic slowly', and I think that has been an excellent stabilising force for our organisation."

O'Brien suggested it was a significant work-ethic that got

Foran through the tough times and allowed him to bring the team with him on the journey.

"Having worked with him, what I can say about the person is that I have never worked with anyone who has a stronger work ethic as he does," O'Brien gushed.

"He is renowned for being up at four in the morning doing 100 press ups, going up and down stairs for another half hour, and then coming into work reading all the latest financial reports from around the world, and by about 6am, emails start coming in - he is hard to keep up with."

O'Brien also suggested to delegates, "He has most certainly got us through a significant storm and in really good shape coming out the other side".

Foran started at Air New Zealand just two weeks before the pandemic and has also experienced significant engine problems relating to the A320 and 787 fleets while in charge of the airline.

He will officially step down on 20 Oct when Air New Zealand Chief Digital Officer, Nikhil Ravishankar (**TD** 30 Jul), steps into the position of CEO. **DF**

## Infinity born to Thai

**INFINITY** Holidays, in collaboration with the Tourism Authority of Thailand, has relaunched its Thailand destination campaign, designed to reignite agents' passion for the Southeast Asian country.

The trade push will spotlight a curated selection of tailored travel packages available to book now via Infinity Holidays, featuring handpicked hotels, immersive local experiences, and ground transfers.



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## AC loyalty shake-up

**FROM** 01 Jan 2026, members of Air Canada's loyalty program Aeroplan will start earning points based on dollars spent rather than distance flown.

On the same date, AC will also introduce a new single path for achieving Aeroplan Elite status.

## HBA ready to court Asia

**HOBART** has set its sights on attracting new airlines - including major Asian carriers - to operate direct services to the Tasmanian capital following the opening of its newly upgraded runway.

The \$130 million project, which features a strengthened runway, new taxiways and aircraft parking bays, was officially opened this week, allowing HBA to facilitate larger aircraft including the Boeing 787 and Airbus A350.

The new runway is in addition to a major \$200 million refurbishment and expansion of terminal facilities underway.

"We already have international flights to Auckland, and this upgraded runway now provides us the opportunity to take the airport to the next level and secure direct services to an Asian hub such as Singapore or Hong Kong," Hobart Airport Chief Executive Norris Carter said.

Hobart Airport contributed \$70 million to the project, with the



Federal Government tipping in the remaining \$60 million.

Carter said he was proud the project came in safely, on-time, on-budget and with minimal impact on regular flight services.

Federal Minister for Transport, Catherine King, said the upgraded runway will help Tasmania "connect to the world".

"The newly reopened Hobart Airport will create opportunities for Tasmanians, from local businesses [to] tourism operators, to strengthening Tassie's connection to the Antarctic sector," King said. *ML*

**Pictured:** King and Carter get ready for takeoff in Hobart.

## NCL feels the vibe

**NORWEGIAN** Cruise Line (NCL) has confirmed it will be updating its Jewel-class ships, *Norwegian Jewel* and *Norwegian Pearl*, by adding the Vibe Beach Club.

The adults-only Club will replace a sundeck on Deck 14, with the renos to take place in Oct & Nov.

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## Youth opportunity

**IFLYGO**, specialists in travel solutions for the 18-35 demographic, has announced its 2026 collection, which includes a range of new itineraries.

Fresh global routes include journeys through Europe, South-East Asia, Latin America, and Japan, with a focus on socially shareable experiences.

The products are specifically built around gen Z and millennials, with low-deposit bookings and the ability to create unique trips thanks to the modular trip-building process.

"If travel agents are not targeting the 18-35 market, they're missing out," Daniel Popescu, Experience Designer at iFlyGo, exclaimed.

"iFlyGo gives travel agents the tools to win in this space," he said, adding that the brand provides sellers with access to a portal featuring full support, marketing materials and commission incentives.

## Older travellers embrace AI

**THE** number of Australian travellers using AI to plan and book holidays is rising sharply, with growth in the number of baby boomers leading the charge to adopt the emerging tech.

According to the 2025 *Hospitality and Travel Report* by fintech company Adyen, use of AI by older Aussies to book travel has soared by 106% year-on-year.

Interestingly, close to two-thirds of the demographic said their increased use of AI has helped to cut through an onslaught of advertising on social media.

Meanwhile the report also showed that overall, 28% of Aussies are now using AI to plan, book, choose a destination and search for last-minute deals.

All age groups are making use of AI, with gen z and millennials the most active, and most respondents stated the tech has delivered travel inspiration faster than any other method.

However, travel businesses believe the fragmented nature of on-site payment systems are limiting their ability to safely offer products through AI.

Adyen Country Manager Australia and New Zealand Hayley Fisher said while AI is changing how Aussies plan and book travel, it is also spawning vulnerabilities, with 39% of Australian hotels reporting a rise in fraud attempts.

"With AI now central to travel planning, security can't be an afterthought," he said.

"Guests expect every interaction from discovery to payment to be effortless, but also secure."

Fisher said more hospitality businesses are embedding AI in their digital platforms to help with search and inspire faster booking, but that AI is yet to speed up payment authentication and identify fraud.

Adyen's research involved 40,000 Aussie respondents. *ML*

## FCTG inks TNZ deal

**FLIGHT** Centre Travel Group (FCTG) and Tourism New Zealand have entered into a three-year global strategic partnership.

The collaboration will focus on driving significant tourism growth across FCTG's key markets, including Australia, the UK, Canada, and South Africa, with the shared goal of reaching 3.7 million tourist arrivals by the end of FY 2026.

FCTG Global MD Andrew Stark wrote on LinkedIn, "Together, we'll spotlight New Zealand's breathtaking landscapes, rich culture, and warm hospitality, while growing the visiting friends and relatives (VFR), leisure, and business travel segments."



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## Travel risk manager makes Oz debut

### EXCLUSIVE

A **NEW** travel risk company has debuted in the Australian market, with Healix International opening a Melbourne office this week.

Speaking with **Travel Daily** about the decision to put boots on the ground, CEO James Henderson (pictured) said that while the business has been active in Australia through strategic partnerships with insurers and brokers, the new office marked a formal push to secure new business locally.

The sales opportunities for Healix locally include providing travel risk services and assessments for universities, mining, energy companies, as well as operating through insurance brokers.

However, Henderson was keen to highlight that its business model can cater to a wide range of companies that operate across multiple verticals.



"The market in Australia is quite concentrated and there are only a very small number of providers, and the feedback we received prior to launching was that Australian companies would value more choice," he said.

One of its points-of-difference with competitors is a lower price point, which Henderson said is possible due to its nimble structure and low cost base, driven primarily by a targeted contractor model instead of a larger office network.

"Some of our competitors

openly promote a 30-plus operating hub model, and that makes them 26 times more expensive than [us].

"What we are trying to do is be nimble and keep our fixed costs as low as possible, but what we are still able to do in an emergency is scale up quickly - that's the real trick," he said.

Providing risk assessments and emergency evacuations are just some of the services offered by Healix, with Henderson stating the appetite is only growing among APAC companies as the world becomes less stable.

"Just in the last few weeks we evacuated a significant number of clients out of the Middle East in Israel and Iran," he said.

"At one level, instability creates a need for us, but we are definitely seeing clients investing more in pre-emptive risk assessments, which is one of the biggest part of our business." AB



## Window Seat

**FOR** those travellers who love nothing better than wandering through the wilderness of the world's literary greats, the chance may be closer to home than they think.

A recent list of the most beautiful book collections in the world compiled by literary tourism initiative 1000 Libraries, placed the State Library of South Australia (pictured) in second spot, just behind The Library of Trinity College, Dublin.

The Aussie depository beat out more culturally renowned libraries, such as the Duke Humfrey's (Oxford University).



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## Going luxe in Sri Lanka



**FLIGHT** Centre consultant Marlee Wakeling recently enjoyed some of the most luxurious offerings to be found anywhere in Sri Lanka as reward for her recent incentive win.

Wakeling was hosted on the trip by Intrepid Travel as part of its 'Sell 15, Get 1 Free' incentive, which unlocked access to some of the tour operator's premium products and experiences.

Inspired by a recommendation from her cousin, Wakeling took the opportunity to tick a new country off her list and enjoy part of Intrepid's Premium range.

"I absolutely fell in love with the country and would go back in a heartbeat," Wakeling said, heaping praise on her tour leader who made the trip memorable.

"He was extremely personable and professional, but also relaxed and friendly.

"Hearing about his life in Sri Lanka - from family life and political history to COVID and the

2004 tsunami made the trip ten times more interesting than if we were travelling independently."

Highlights of the trip included a visit to a community that makes its living from pottery, which featured a chance for Wakeling to try the craft for herself.

"The family didn't speak English, but they welcomed us, showed us their craft, and even let us have a go," she said.

"Through our leader, they told us they love having Intrepid guests because the travellers are respectful and genuinely curious."

The Intrepid experience also included a diversion from the typical path taken, with a visit to a roadside mango orchard to try a local combination featuring mango with chilli and salt.

From her experience, Wakeling said other consultants should aim for Intrepid's incentive, with the reward well worth the effort.

Wakeling is pictured above with her Intrepid Premium tour group.

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## Caps could lose US\$245b

**CITIES** that choose to cap visitors numbers in the pursuit of green objectives are putting themselves at risk of losing out on billions of dollars in revenue, a new report from the World Travel and Tourism Council has claimed.

The *Managing Destination Overcrowding* report assessed 11 popular tourist cities in Europe, and found that if domestic and int'l tourism nights per capita were pared back to the average across the continent, it would cause a massive US\$245 billion hit to the region's economy.

Modelling showed that Venice could lose up to US\$14.1 billion alone in direct GDP, and an additional US\$18.4 billion in indirect and induced GDP.

Meanwhile, Amsterdam would be in line to leak similar volumes of value, with around US\$12.4 billion in direct GDP and \$23.6 billion in indirect and induced GDP on the chopping block if



tourist caps were implemented.

In addition to the dent in GDP, the industry body's report also showed that such limits would likely lead to mass job losses in the cities studied, with close to 750,000 workers estimated to go across Italy and the Netherlands.

While a large part of the impact would be felt in the cities themselves, the indirect impacts would also have negative economic ripples throughout the country and across borders.

Rather than implement caps, the WTTC tourism report suggested overcrowding should be tackled through combating underinvestment in infrastructure, poor urban planning, and fragmented governance, to name a few. AB

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## FNQ chases MICE

**BUSINESS** Events Cairns & Great Barrier Reef has launched a new funding program to grow the Far North Qld's MICE sector.

The organisation will zero in on attempting to attract and secure conferences to the region over the next four years, with international and national eligible events able to apply for funding of \$10,000 or more.

Events eligible to receive the funding must take place before 30 Jun 2029, and in addition to financial support, the Business Events Cairns & Great Barrier Reef team will provide a suite of complimentary services.

These include delegate boosting, marketing support, and connecting meeting planners with venues and accommodation providers, as well as the broader local events supply network.

## BRISBANE'S BIZ EVENTS BONANZA

**A RECORD-BREAKING** 2024-25 for the Brisbane Economic Development Agency (BEDA) has delivered a successful year worth more than \$1.4 billion for the city.

Brisbane hosted hundreds of major events across the financial year, including the launch of Bluey's World, the NRL Magic Round, and the Australian Tourism Exchange, which returned after almost 20 years.

BEDA's investment attraction and business growth programs surpassed \$1 billion, while Brisbane's calendar of blockbuster events, conferences and strategic global marketing injected hundreds of millions into the visitor economy.

The destination hit record highs for visitors (9.4 million), nights spent (53.7 million) and spending by delegates (\$11.3 billion).

BEDA's Global MedTech Accelerator and Future Food Initiative supported local companies to generate over \$650



million in economic activity.

The agency delivered 182 capability building workshops at the Brisbane Business Hub, as well as one-on-one mentoring sessions for local businesses.

**MEANWHILE**, the 'Brisbane Favours the Bold' campaign delivered more than \$80 million in economic activity, reached 30

million people, and helped drive a 37% surge across Visit Brisbane social channels.

BEDA also supported vital recovery efforts after Cyclone Alfred to restore visitation and help businesses recover from disruptions caused by the weather event, which cost them more than \$68 million. *MS*

## Sofitel sees better

**SOFITEL** Sydney Darling Harbour has unveiled a new LED wall in its ballroom.

The 49m<sup>2</sup> installation offers an elevated visual experience for conferences, gala events, and product launches.

Greater screen clarity, a more expansive display, better content flexibility, and a more engaging solution than traditional projectors are all new benefits.

## Noosa launches push to attract business events planners

**TOURISM** Noosa is inviting event planners to swap the boardroom for the beach, with the launch of its latest campaign, 'Discover Noosa - Where Business Events Meet Sunshine Days'.

Business Events Noosa, a specialist service of Tourism Noosa, offers tailored, independent advice to assist planners with all events, from



finding unique venues and trusted suppliers to curating memorable experiences.

At the heart of the campaign is

a competition which gives one lucky business event organiser the chance to win a Noosa escape for four colleagues.

The prize includes three nights at Peppers Noosa Resort & Villas, a sunset dinner cruise with Noosa Cruiser Restaurant & Bar, a four-wheel drive beach adventure with Sunny Jeeps, and return flights from the winner's closest capital city.

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## APPOINTMENTS

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appointments@traveldaily.com.au

Former P&O Cruises Australia and Crystalbrook Collection marketing guru **Katie Malone** has landed her latest role as Chief Marketing Officer at **Aurora Expeditions**. Malone is highly experienced across the travel spectrum and has previously worked with cruise, hotels and airlines. Her new role will be based at the company's Sydney office.

As **Flight Centre Travel Group** readies to scale up its specialist expertise portfolio, the company has promoted **Askin Erkec** as its new Nation Leader - Flight Centre Collections. Erkec will work to provide greater opportunities for experienced and specialised consultants to showcase their particular expertise, whether that be in youth travel, business and corporate, or complex airfare building.

Based in **Qantas'** London office, **Darsh Chapman** has been appointed as Regional General Manager UK, Europe, Middle East and Africa. Chapman will be tasked with growing Qantas' presence in new and existing markets. She brings 23 years with the Flying Kangaroo to her new role, during which time she has held numerous senior positions.

**Kelvin Murray** has taken on the role of Director of Expedition Operations at **HX Expeditions** as the company prepares to mark its historic 130 years of operation. Murray will report to HX Chief Operations Officer Iain McNeill, working closely to elevate the overall guest experience.

**Wendy Wu Tours** has bolstered its trade support team, recruiting **Amy Sharp** as its new Sales Support Executive. Sharp brings experience in retail travel with UK brand Baldwins Travel to her new role and says she is ready to help agents succeed, inspire customers and close new sales.

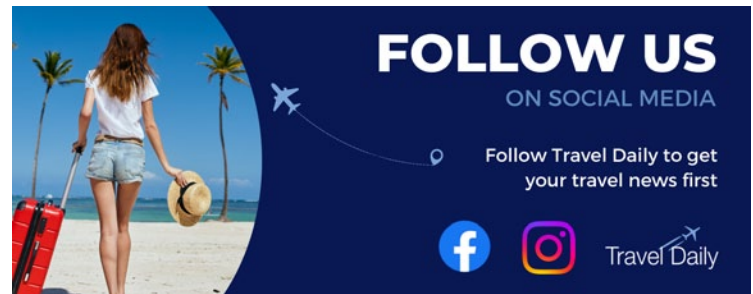
Experienced hotelier **Allen Howden** has assumed control of **The Westin Yokohama** as General Manager. Bringing 25 years in hospitality to his new role, Howden has held senior positions at W Bangkok, Swissotel London and St Regis Singapore, where he worked most recently.

Regular **Crystal Cruises** travellers will soon see a familiar face back on board, with **Shane Morley** returning to the line as Cruise Director on *Crystal Symphony*. Morley has spent nearly two decades at sea and returns to the line from a land-based role managing a major WA winery.

Luxury hotel specialist **Claudia Scharwze** has been appointed the new General Manager at luxury Phuket retreat **Trisara**. Scharwze has been tasked with introducing the resort's new 'blue zone' wellness concept and reinventing the property's 'elevated Thai' culinary structure.

**Plaza Premium Group** has promoted **Cavin Loh** as its new Regional GM for Southeast Asia, managing lounges in Malaysia, Cambodia & Thailand.

Bringing two decades of culinary expertise to his new role, **Patina Maldives Fari Islands** has hired **Benat Alonso** as its Director of Culinary. Alonso will oversee the resort's 13 restaurants and dining concepts.



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## The Clements opens

**BOUTIQUE** luxury property The Clements Hotel in Cambridge, New Zealand, has opened its doors to the public this week.

The 29-room hotel is located at the site of the town's former 1866 beaux-arts Masonic hotel, is run by Capstone Hotel Management, and features The Gallery restaurant and The Clements Cafe & Wine Bar.

Located in the centre of town and a short 15-minute drive from Hamilton Airport, the hotel's key accommodation, the Corner Suite, features a gas fireplace and private courtyard.

Meanwhile, The Clements Suite includes a free-standing bathtub, walk-in shower, and 30m<sup>2</sup> terrace for alfresco dining.

Tourist attractions nearby include Hobbiton, Cambridge Town Hall and Museum, the Waitamo Caves, as well as the Grassroots Trust Velodrome.

## FCTG RAPS again

**FLIGHT** Centre Travel Group (FCTG) has launched the second phase of its Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP), reaffirming its commitment to fostering meaningful relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

The RAP Innovate has established 14 key actions and 68 deliverables dedicated to reconciliation, continuing to build on the foundation laid since the first RAP was launched in 2022.

FCTG has so far supported multiple Indigenous businesses, with last year's collaboration involving 39 companies and a spend of around \$2.8 million.

FCTG First Nations Inclusion Leader, Lynne Mailata, said "The Flight Centre Foundation continues to offer support and resources to communities worldwide, with contributions exceeding \$20 million."

## WE'RE HIRING

### Business Development Manager

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