



Singapore Airlines is proud to once again be the Major Sponsor of the National Travel Industry Awards.

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What an inspiring evening celebrating the excellence of Australia's travel community.

Congratulations to all the Finalists and Award Winners!



NTIA Special Edition

Travel Daily's NTIA Special Edition features eight pages of news, photos and highlights from **Beyond Borders** and the **NTIAs**, plus a cover page from **Singapore Airlines**, and full pages from:

- ANZCRO
- TravelManagers

A heartfelt thanks

NTIA'S major sponsor this year, Singapore Airlines, is offering a heartfelt thanks to its Australian trade partners for their continued support and collaboration.

The airline also congratulates all winners - see the **cover page**.

Great place to work

IT IS official - TravelManagers really is a wonderful workplace, winning Most outstanding Employee Engagement and Recruitment Program at the NTIAs - see **page 10**.

Industry's best shine bright at NTIAs

THE very best of the travel industry shone bright during the National Travel Industry Awards (NTIAs) at The Star in Brisbane on Sat night, as more than 1,200 professionals celebrated a year of shared success.

Excellence from every part of the sector was in the spotlight of the event, which was supported by major sponsor Singapore Airlines and afterparty sponsor CVFR.

The atmosphere in the room was electric, from the high-energy lead-in dance troupe to the floor-to-ceiling LED split screens celebrating each of the 40 winners.

CEO Dean Long shared with *Travel Daily* the two ingredients in "the special sauce" in this year's successful NTIAs.

"[One is a] great team I get to lead at ATIA - nine individuals who are absolutely dedicated to the industry and making sure we have our say," he said.



"Secondly, [is something] you cannot take away from the travel industry - we are special and unique and what we do is come together and celebrate each other's successes and that's exactly what we've done tonight."

The NTIAs followed ATIA's Beyond Borders Summit on Saturday, where travel leaders discussed the opportunities and future of the sector.

Next year's NTIAs and

Beyond Borders will be held in Melbourne. *JHM*

ANZCRO 'humbled'

ANZCRO is sharing its gratitude for the two awards it picked up at the 2025 NTIA Awards on the weekend: Most Popular Reservations and Group Team and Most Outstanding Wholesaler - Destination/Experience.

More details on **page nine**.

CVFR Travel Group would like to extend a huge CONGRATULATIONS to all of this year's NTIA Finalists and Winners.

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TTC takes triple crown

THE Travel Corporation's (TTC) promise to create "transformative travel" has been strongly endorsed by three significant wins this year at the NTIA Awards in Brisbane.

TTC took out Most Outstanding Tour Operator - Global for TTC Tour Brands; Most Outstanding Marketing Campaign, Supplier for Contiki - 'Live The Legend'; and Most Outstanding Sales Executive - Tour Operator, thanks to Jo Leckie at TTC Tour Brands.

Managing Director, Contiki, Trafalgar, Insight Vacations, ANZ at TTC, Toni Ambler (**pictured**), said it came down to the group's team effort that brought home the awards.

"We've put so much effort into these five brands and they are so loved by the industry - every single one of them have such a dedicated team behind them," Ambler said.

The win for Marketing Campaign



was the second year in a row that TTC has taken it out, this year for Contiki, while last year it was for Trafalgar.

"It's amazing to bring it home for the second time in a row," Ambler admitted.

"Everyone worked so hard for this that we put blood, sweat and tears into and I'm just so proud of the team and what they have achieved tonight." *DF*



Travel Daily

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Viking doubles up

VIKING has made National Travel Industry Awards history, becoming the first-ever cruise line to win both Most Popular Ocean Cruise Operator and Most Popular River Cruise Operator in the same year.

The cruise line took out the river award for the first time on Sat, having also won the ocean award for the third time in a row earlier on in the night.

Viking beat out Uniworld Boutique River Cruises, the winner from the past two years, to take home the river gong.

Director of Sales & Revenue Keira Smith said she and the team (**pictured**) were "shocked" to win the historic double.



Travellers Choice wins five on the trot

TRAVELLERS Choice has once again claimed the honour of Most Outstanding Travel Agency Network, now for the fifth year in a row.

The Perth-based network beat out the Australian Travel Agents Co-Operative, CT Partners, itravel, and Magellan Travel to win their fifth success triumph.

Managing Director Christian Hunter said he was "over the moon" his team had achieved the incredible five-peat.

"We've been successful in the last few years but you never take these things for granted," Hunter told *Travel Daily*.

"What this success does is it drives us to be better; it drives us to be better for our members, it drives us to be better internally.

"We've got a fabulous stable of members who are so supportive of everything we do...it's really them who make the magic."


VIKING

One Viking

#1 for Rivers
#1 for Oceans
5 years in a row





Panel calls drop in training “alarming”

THE travel industry is continuing to face significant challenges when it comes to enticing new entrants, with a Beyond Borders panel of senior executives and a Gen Z rep sharing their concerns.

Roslyn Ranse of Travel Agent Achievers and itravel led the panel featuring Jean Summers, co-owner at Clean Cruising; Natalie Turmine, CEO of Service and Creative Skills Australia; and Phoebe Champion, Gen Z Advisory committee member at My First Job (**all pictured**).

Turmine was first to drop an inconvenient truth, sharing that a dip in Certificate III completion rates was “alarming”.

“Since 2019, we have seen enrolments in the Cert III in travel drop by 50%, but what’s more alarming is that completions have dropped by 85% - so no one’s doing the training,” Turmine said.

She shared that the sector had told her the training was



outdated, misaligned, did not meet industry needs, and required significant updating.

Summers noted that there was not a lack of interest in working in the travel industry.

A recent job advertised by Clean Cruising requiring no experience garnered 550 applicants, with Summers revealing many were highly skilled professionals from healthcare, nursing and finance.

Champion, who represented a generation entering the workforce, said, “I don’t think they know what’s out there for them yet”, alluding to Gen Z being

unaware of the opportunities that exist and a lack of promotion from brands.

The point was not lost on Summers, who suggested a rebrand of the term ‘travel advisor’ to entice new interest.

“Maybe we need to stop calling them travel advisors and to tap into the younger generation - maybe we just call ourselves ‘travel influencers,’” she said, suggesting it was an appropriate term for the job agents undertake.

ATIA Chair Christian Hunter also addressed the issue as part of ATIA reforms (**TD 17 Oct**). *DF*

Mobile success story

MTA - Mobile Travel Agents Australia has taken out its namesake gong at the NTIAs - securing Most Outstanding Mobile Advisor Network.

The network was up against stiff competition from 1000 Mile Travel Group, Connected Travel, Envoyage, Travelglobe and TravelManagers Australia.

Owner Karren Merricks spoke to **Travel Daily** after the win, labelling the award “amazing”.

“We’ve always been about people and putting people first, it has never been too corporate, it’s always been about people and we have a passion for that,” she said.

Merricks shared that many didn’t believe MTA would be able to retain its family culture as it grew its staff count, but that she always felt it would be able to if it stuck to what it believed in.

“I said I didn’t care how big it gets, you can always have a family culture, and we’ve been able to retain it,” she added.

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Industry leaders unite for an optimistic future

THE prospects for the travel industry over the next few years are extremely bright, according to participants in a high-level panel at Fri's ATIA Beyond Borders conference in Brisbane.

The group (pictured) included Helloworld Executive Director, Cinzia Burnes; Flight Centre Managing Director Graham Turner; Christian Leibl-Cote from Collette; and Webjet CEO Katrina Barry, who together faced questions posed by ATIA CEO Dean Long.

Canvassing topics including AI, the situation in the USA, working from home and industry staffing, the wide-ranging discussion also probed the participants' opinions about what they expect the industry to look like in the future.

Burnes got a laugh out of many in the room when she suggested that "airlines will once again pay 12% commission, suppliers will not go directly to the clients, ATIA



membership will be compulsory and we will all be making a lot more money as a result".

Being more realistic, Burnes asserted that travel advisors would still be a "very important part of this environment," while automation and artificial intelligence - "applying actual intelligence to the process" - could increase productivity.

Webjet chief Barry predicted the future would see a "strong, profitable, happy industry" which will benefit from improved economic conditions, while Leibl-Cote pointed to the upcoming transfer of wealth - worth about US\$90 trillion combined in the US, Canada and Australia - to the next generation.

"The opportunities are endless,"

he said, adding that "everybody can take a piece of the pie, there's plenty for everyone."

Leibl-Cote added he hoped that the governments of all three countries "really understand how much the travel industry does for the economy", particularly noting his personal experience entering the US from Canada where numbers have cratered in the current political environment.

Finally, Graham 'Skroo' Turner from Flight Centre was upbeat about the expansion of corporate travel, the ongoing growth of FCTG's staff numbers - whom he noted are expected to work in the office five days a week - as well as the company's specialist brands like Topdeck and Back-Roads Touring "which we think there's a lot of opportunity for".

"And one of the things that is going to be quite hard for artificial intelligence to replicate is a tour operator," he noted. *BP*

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LET'S TALK



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NTIA judging - like picking a favourite child

OPINION

Bruce Piper is Editor at Large for the Business Publishing Group, and has been a National Travel Industry Awards judge for some years. Got an opinion to share? Let us know in up to 400 words via email to feedback@traveldaily.com.au.



ALL families have their own dynamics, and as the eldest of four siblings, I can attest that each one of us believes that one of the others was our parents' favourite. In my opinion, I was the hard-working, responsible one, always doing my best while my wastrel sisters and brother had a grand old time being indulged with ice cream after dinner and allowed to drive the family car. My siblings would also be able to describe how I was given every advantage, as the treasured

first offspring, while they were forced to subsist on the scraps of affection I left under the table. These feelings are, I'm sure, in direct contradiction to the best efforts of my amazing mum and dad to treat us all equally.

In a similar vein, judging the

“Spare a thought for the judges who have sleepless nights having to choose winners...”

National Travel Industry Awards is an extremely difficult task because, in my opinion, finalists all really deserve to be winners. As has been shown yet again in 2025, the NTIAs are a really big deal, and simply being nominated - let alone becoming a finalist or a

winner - is a huge honour.

I'm privileged to have been part of the process, and without revealing anything about the particular categories I've judged, I can say that the standard of our industry is incredibly high.

It is more than just polished presentations - everyone who participates truly pours their heart and soul into their entries.

I know it sounds like a platitude to say that just being a finalist reflects excellence, but it's absolutely true, and the difference between being a winner and a runner-up is tiny.

So if you've ever been a finalist at the NTIAs, either this year or in the past, please be assured that you are in esteemed company; you only missed out on winning by a tiny margin - and spare a thought for the judges who had sleepless nights choosing winners from among such deserving entrants.

Helloworld on brand

HELLOWORLD has walked away with the Most Outstanding Branded Travel Agency Group award at the NTIAs, capping off a big year for the group.

"This is the first one for this category since 2019 - we all know what happened after that, so we are extremely excited and very grateful to the network which is doing a great job," Executive Director Cinzia Burnes (pictured) told *Travel Daily's* Adam Bishop after the award win.

Recently, Helloworld shared news of a multi-store expansion in Western Australia through Cassie Perry (TD 01 Oct) while in Sep, Felicity Dascombe's Pursers Travel Group expanded, adding its 14th Helloworld Travel branded agency, with the most recent one in Noosa (TD 12 Sep).

On celebrating, Burnes joked that having learnt from previous awards ceremonies, she would have a relatively quiet night.

"I have done a lot of after parties in my years, and I have learned that going to bed after the last song is probably the best idea, plus an early morning flight on Sunday," she said.

"Those days [big nights] are over unfortunately but it's been a great night." DF

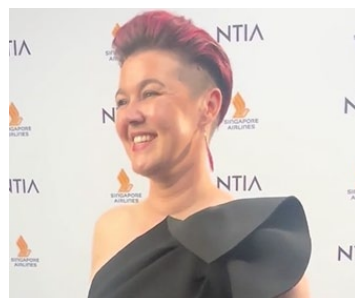


Back-Roads at the front of the pack

A MASSIVE year for Global Touring has been capped off with a huge win for its Back-Roads brand, which snared the Most Outstanding Tour Operator - Specialised award at the NTIAs.

The popular brand has already undergone a refresh to ensure its appeal among Gen X travellers entering its target demographic (TD 09 May), accompanied by a raft of additional trade activity.

Accepting the award on behalf of the team was General Manager



APAC Anna Fawcett (pictured), who admitted picking up the gong was "incredible".

"I am so proud of the team

here and in the UK who have all worked really, really hard this year with the refresh," Fawcett told *Travel Daily*.

"To receive an award like this and to have that validation and recognition from our peers in the industry is just amazing."

During the Beyond Borders Travel Summit, Back-Roads was the sponsor for lunch, proving it likes to do things differently by having opera singers serenade guests during the break. AB

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The industry dazzles at the NTIAs

THE Australian Travel Industry Association (ATIA) toasted the brightest stars of the travel sector over the weekend at the National Travel Industry Awards (NTIAs). Supported by major sponsor Singapore Airlines and afterparty sponsor CVFR, nearly 1,200 professionals come together at The Star, Brisbane for a

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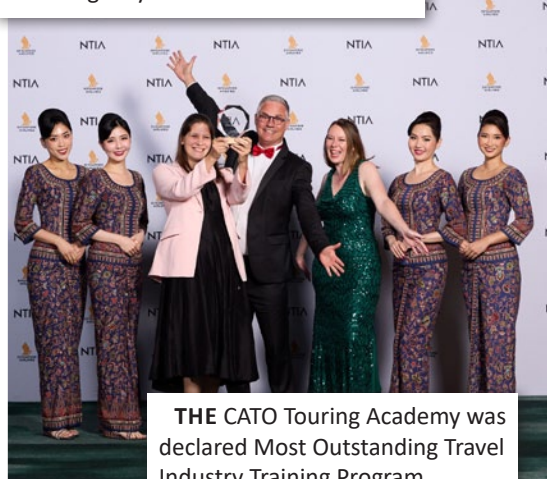
glamorous evening of celebration.

The sold-out event recognised outstanding achievement and innovation across the industry, from agents and tour operators to wholesalers and suppliers, and highlighted the passion, and resilience that continues to define the sector.

Highlights included a double win for Viking, which was named Most Popular Cruise Operator in both the Ocean and River categories, Travellers Choice taking out the Most Outstanding Travel Agency Network, and Expedition Cruise Specialists winning the People's Choice Award. Image credit: eventphotos



WEBJET was over the moon after receiving the Most Outstanding Online Travel Agency - Established accolade.



THE CATO Touring Academy was declared Most Outstanding Travel Industry Training Program.



INSIDE Travel Group's Yvette Montell named Most Outstanding Sales Executive - Wholesaler.



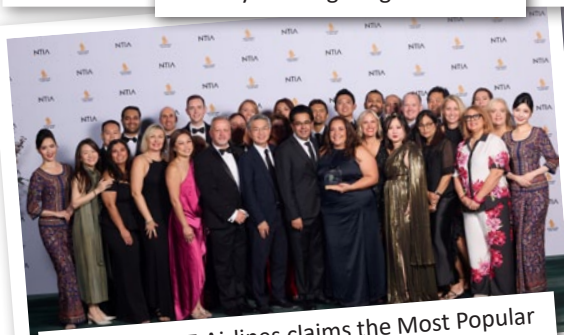
TTC Tour Brands celebrating its win as Most Outstanding Tour Operator - Global.



VIKING scores a double-whammy win, taking home Most Popular Ocean Cruise Operator and Most Popular River Cruise Operator.



ROOKIE of the Year went to Travelglobe's Alex Pilarski.



SINGAPORE Airlines claims the Most Popular Airline - Online gong.



BACK-ROADS Touring was recognised as Most Outstanding Tour Operator - Specialised.



HELLOWORLD Travel took home Most Outstanding Branded Travel Agency Group.



THE Travel Corporation's Jo Leckie was named Most Outstanding Sales Executive - Tour Operator.

Insights and inspo at Beyond Borders

KEY industry members came together in Brisbane for ATIA's Beyond Borders Travel Summit, which took place in Brisbane last Fri ahead of the NTIAs.

ATIA Director of Membership and Industry Affairs, Richard Taylor, kicked off the event before ATIA CEO Dean Long and Chair Christian Hunter took to the stage to unpack the year so far. A standout announcement at the marquee event was the launch of the Committee of Independent Travel Agents and Advisors, which will aim to champion independent agents (**TD** 17 Oct).

Other highlights included presentations from Biheng Zhang, GM of Intrepid Foundation and Adele Labine-Romain, Head of Travel and Tourism at Roy Morgan Research, in addition to panels featuring heavyweight travel executives. Image credit: eventphotos



ATIA CEO Dean Long addresses a full house.



HELLOWORLD Travel's Cinzia Burnes and Graham 'Skroo' Turner share their insights with the audience.



WEBJET Group CEO Katrina Barry shares her perspective on travel in 2026 and beyond during the Travel Leaders' Outlook session.



ATAC'S Michelle Emerton, Jack Taylor and Georgina Randall.



ATIA CEO Dean Long takes to the stage to unpack some of the major trends this year.



NATALIE Turmine, Service and Creative Skills Australia, and Jean Summers, Clean Cruising, discuss how travel businesses can build a stronger workforce for the future.



ATIA Director of Membership and Industry Affairs, Richard Taylor, opens the summit.



TRAVELLERS Choice CEO Christian Hunter, Envoyage's Karen Dowling and Collette Executive VP Global Sales Christian Leibl-Cote.



AN OPERA singer regales attendees during lunch, sponsored by Back-Roads Touring.

Rookie of the year

TRAVELGLOBE'S Alex Pilarski had a tough start in the industry, but her hard work has paid off, scooping up Rookie of the Year at the NTIAs.

"I had rejection after rejection just to try and get a foot in the door of traditional bricks-and-mortar agency because I didn't tick all the boxes that they were looking for...and then I found Travelglobe who took me on," she recalled.

From there, Pilarski began building her career from the bottom up, developing client relationships, facing rejections and building a business.

"I worked hard to get here and even when I kept hearing 'no', I just kept going," she reflected in a LinkedIn post.

"I was determined to find my place in travel," she added.

Phil marks lucky 13

PHIL Hoffmann Travel's (PHT) NTIA gong is "the accumulation of blood, sweat and tears over many years", said Chief Operating Officer Michelle Ashcroft.

The business won Most Outstanding Branded Leisure Travel agency on the weekend - the 13th win for PHT, she said.

Ashcroft highlighted the team's hard work in the last five years since the pandemic.

"The rebuilding of the camaraderie, the new blood entering our business as well that have just absolutely shone - this is for them and they have earned it," she gushed.

Earlier this year, founder Phil Hoffman announced his retirement, with MD and CEO Peter Williams continuing to lead the brand, supported by Ashcroft.

Cruise stars shine at NTIAs



CRUISE is booming, and Clean Cruising's Samantha Renvoye (pictured left) proved as much on Sat, taking out the coveted Most Outstanding Travel Consultant - Leisure award.

Renvoye topped an elite class of travel advisors, including Fiona O'Dowd, ATP Cruise & Travel Terrigal; Kai Floto, Southlands Travel & Cruise; Lauren Zanesco, itravel Griffith; and Mandi Forrester-Jones, Viva Travel.

The award capped off a sterling year for the Brisbane-based advisor, who earlier in 2025 took home the Cruise Consultant of the Year gong at the Cruise Lines International Association Awards.

An emotional Renvoye described winning an NTIA as the premier highlight from her time in the travel sector thus far.

"I've been in the industry for a long time and this is the pinnacle of my career," she told *TD*.

Renvoye also spoke of her faith in the Clean Cruising team - one of the most well-renowned travel

agencies in Australia

"I am very proud of aligning myself with the right family."

Renvoye said she thinks the rapidly growing cruise sector "is only going to get bigger in the years to come".

MEANWHILE, Viking was not the only winner in the cruise sector to go back-to-back, with APT Travel Group's Barbara Baron (pictured right) claiming her second Most Outstanding Sales Executive - Cruise award in a row.

No stranger to taking to the stage to accept an NTIA, Baron credited her success to her enthusiasm for selling her cruise line's voyages.

"APT has the most amazing cruise product, I can wake up every day and say: 'I'm so excited'," she enthused.

"We have got brand-new river ships in Europe, which I absolutely have a passion to sell," Baron added.

She also thanked the advisors she works with for all of their help to win the award. *MS*



Window Seat

AN EFFECTIVE product solves a basic problem - sometimes it is so basic that no one actually thinks to solve it.

CVFR came up with a solution to one of those problems over the weekend at the NTIAs, thanks to its very creative partnership.

What would a large group of travel industry execs be doing on the night?

Walking, standing and dancing while wearing heels of various heights.

Either CVFR stole all of the hotel slippers from Brisbane CBD hotels and rebranded them quickly on the night, or they have been thinking about it for a while and came up with a bespoke solution that the entire crowd got behind.

NTIA Marketing Campaign of the Year 2026?





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WINNER

With heartfelt thanks from our whānau to yours

We're incredibly grateful to be recognised as the **Most Popular Reservations & Group Team at the 2025 NTIA Awards** — and humbled to also receive award for **Most Outstanding Wholesaler – Destination/Experience**.

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