



## Muster to Brisbane

**TOURISM NT** still has several places open for agents to attend its NT Muster event in Brisbane.

Taking place at the Calile Hotel Brisbane tomorrow (10 Sep), the organisation will host advisors from 5pm and offer free food and drinks, as well as the chance to win great prizes - register **HERE**.

## INSPIRING VACATIONS

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## Forever Gold a huge hit

**EXCLUSIVE**

**THE** membership response to Virgin Australia announcing its new Forever Gold status (**TD** 17 Oct 2024) has been "overwhelmingly positive", Velocity Frequent Flyer CEO Nick Rohrlach (**pictured**) has revealed.

Speaking with **Travel Daily** this week, Rohrlach said the decision to provide select members with permanent lifetime benefits followed years of feedback.

"When we announced it, our contact centre was overwhelmed by people calling in to understand how many status credits they had earned since 2013," he said.

"Now our members can also see their up to date progress in their Velocity app," Rohrlach added.

The new recognition will go



live in Oct this year, and will rival Qantas' Lifetime Gold Status introduced close to 25 years ago.

To qualify, Velocity members must have earned 12,000 status credits since 01 Feb 2013, 2,000 fewer than Qantas (14,000).

Velocity will also expand its status tiers for the first time since 2011 with the new Platinum Plus, which Rohrlach said was about strengthening the Velocity program at "the very top end".

"This is about recognising our most frequent flyers with a truly elevated experience," he said.

"Platinum Plus is also about recognising our most frequent flyers; the people who spend a significant portion of their lives with us, both in the air and on the ground," Rohrlach added. **AB**

## Today's issue of TD

**Travel Daily** today features eight pages of news, including our **Sustainability** page.



Win the flavours of Paris with Qantas Agency Learning\*

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\*Competition closes 11.59pm AEST 12 September 2025. Terms & Conditions apply.



## Cheap N America tix

**QANTAS** has slashed the prices of selected flights to the United States and Canada, with a new seven-day sale offering return economy seats to Los Angeles, leading in from \$999.

Reduced fares to Vancouver, Hawaii, New York, Dallas, and San Francisco are also available.



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## ATAC on the rise but not all about numbers

### EXCLUSIVE

**THE** Australian Travel Agents Cooperative (ATAC) has enjoyed another successful annual period building its membership ranks, increasing its agency network by 13% over the last 12 months.

Speaking at its annual conference in Adelaide over the weekend, Chair Jack Taylor said the solid growth was achieved without marketing or any other type of investment.

"It is a very impressive number on its own, and it will be the cornerstone of our key priority during the last year of our strategic vision," Taylor said.

While historically membership growth has been organic, ATAC confirmed that it is for the first time on the hunt to hire a new staff member in its head office to spearhead member acquisition.

"We will be very aggressive in the market over the next 12 months to try to find more



wonderful people like those that are sitting in this room today."

That membership growth was accompanied by an impressive record-breaking \$705,000 in override payments - the highest annual rebate in its history.

However, Taylor was quick to qualify that the growth story for ATAC is not all about the numbers, maintaining that its core DNA is essential to its future success as a cooperative.

"We continue to be deeply committed to providing value and terrific connections, both with our preferred partners and directly to

our membership," he said.

When it comes to attracting more members, Taylor said key areas will be building on its brand for the remainder of the year, continuing to bring in more preferred partners, and make the working life for its independent travel agents as easy as possible.

"It's our job to inspire them, to remove their barriers, to ensure that they have prosperity as equally as if they were to be in a bigger or more prolific brand in our industry," he said.

Taylor added that while growing the network is a key goal moving forward, he conceded ATAC may not be a good fit for everyone.

"If [agency owners] are looking for 24-7 support to make a GDS booking, ATAC is not the home for them, but if they're looking for a support network with robust knowledge and skills...we drive that quality membership by giving them a home here in ATAC." AB

## Morocco DMC deal

**INTREPID** Travel has renewed its partnership with the Morocco National Tourism Office for a further five years.

The deal will look to promote the emerging destination to Aussies "in innovative ways".

## Royal's next Icon

**ROYAL** Caribbean celebrated the keel-laying for its fourth Icon-class vessel at the Finnish shipyard Meyer Turku.

The yet-to-be-named vessel is set to join the fleet in 2027, bolstering the mammoth trio of *Icon*, *Star* and *Legend of the Seas*.

Royal is yet to confirm if there will be any alternations to the existing design or amenities on offer on the fourth Icon ship.

The news follows the cruise line confirming a new Discovery Class line, which has been confirmed to be smaller in size so that it can visit smaller ports that its mega Icon vessel cannot access.

## AD75 Swiss Travel Pass

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The AD75 Swiss Travel Pass is available only to travel advisors with an active RailPortal account. Requests must be submitted via the **Contact Us** enquiry forms.

**Important to note:** Valid for 1 agent + 1 travelling companion, 1 pass per agent per year, Family card (children travelling with parents) is only offered for full price passes.

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## Air India alterations

AIR India has made significant changes to its schedule for the Northern Hemisphere winter period but will not return to its full international schedule, which was previously promised.

According to a report in Mint, data shared by Cirium shows that the airline is making further changes to its schedule which sees cancellations and frequency reductions across its widebody international network.

CEO Campbell Wilson had previously flagged a return to the full schedule in Oct following the deadly crash of AI171 on 12 Jun.

Of the changes, Pune - Singapore, Delhi - Nairobi, Goa - London Gatwick and Delhi - Washington no longer feature on the schedule.

Frequency reductions will also affect the Delhi to Milan, Zurich and Copenhagen routes, as well as Birmingham - Amritsar and Delhi - Chicago and New York, among others.

## Confidence paying off

A NEW study examining 500,000 travel transactions has found that confident travellers deliver 40% greater spend, convert 25% faster, and generate a significantly higher a return on investment for marketers.

The Growth Distillery, in partnership with Pureprofile, found travellers who exude confidence are more likely to engage with trusted travel editorial content, and less with social media influencers and brand posts.

Confident travellers also make 30% fewer overall visits to various sources, demonstrating less "messy middle" bookings and greater decisiveness.

The report suggested travel confidence is reduced when a person is undergoing major life changes, such as a new job, relationship or moving house.

Frequent visits to government safety websites also signal weak

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booking confidence in the context of excessive safety concerns, while heavy social media engagement often indicates uncertainty when it comes to planning the next trip.

On the other side, confident behaviours include visiting a smaller volume of travel websites, and a greater portion of trusted travel content.

"Confident travellers actively seek quality information before booking, whilst uncertain consumers get lost in endless social media scrolling," The Growth Distillery Senior Manager Audience Intelligence Jessica Folkard (pictured) said. AB

## Bluey's next big ride

THE global reach of Australian children's program *Bluey* continues to expand, with a new roller-coaster themed on the show to open inside the UK's CBeebies Land theme park at Alton Towers Resort next year.

The arrival of the *Bluey* ride builds on the theme park's existing experiences based on the Aussie phenomenon, including a meet-and-greet with the Heeler family, a live stage show, as well as themed hotel rooms.

"We're keeping the exact details and launch date under wraps for now but *Bluey's* limitless energy is sure to be reflected in our new junior coaster," Senior VP at Merlin Entertainments, Sabrina de Carvalho, said.



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## Window Seat

**FLIGHT** Centre Travel Group has released the A-Z of travel, breaking down the alphabet by trending travel terms.

It clearly has no regard for column word counts, so we have chosen just a smattering of examples for you.

D is for Dawdle-day - a day purposely spent wandering aimlessly and discovering unexpected delights.

F is for Frolleagues - combining the best of friends and work colleagues.

H is for HENRY - high earner, not rich yet (pretty much everyone on the east coast of Australia then).

X is for Xenia - an ancient Greek concept of hospitality, generosity and courtesy.

Z is for Zonkout - don't need a definition here, really.

## Smaller airports at risk

**SMALLER** airports could face an unfair burden under the consumer protection scheme proposed in yesterday's Federal Government consultation paper.

That is the position of AAA Chief Executive Simon Westaway, who said the inclusion of airports in the scheme was a world-first, and that collaboration was needed to get the balance right.

He said that Australians deserve a "reliable, responsive and customer focused Aviation experience," and that the

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## Schooled by Quark

**QUARK** Expeditions has introduced a new addition to its advisor learning platform PolarPRO with a new Groups and Charters specialisation module.

The new module is designed to help advisors sell and customise group and charters bookings.

consultation paper recognised that airlines "account for the majority of the operations of the proposed framework".

"However, the AAA is concerned that the scheme is proposed to apply to all airports across Australia," Westaway added.

"Many smaller and regional airports do not have the staff or resources to implement or fund such measures and already face serious financial challenges."

ATIA CEO Dean Long also responded to the proposed protection scheme.

"It has always been our position that airlines and airports should be responsible for issues that arise in their interactions with consumers and the framework for Aviation Industry Ombudsman Scheme appropriately reflects this," he said.

Long has also covered the topic in his regular **TD** column **HERE**. **DF**

## Entire right on track

**ENTIRE** Travel Group has launched its 2026 rail journeys brochure, featuring more than 80 adventures on board new trains including Canyon Spirit, Britannic Explorer, La Dolce Vita Orient Express, Golden Eagle Silk Road Express and plenty more.

Each trip features itineraries, maps, highlights, pricing, inclusions and information on cabin classes and onboard dining.

Agents can use dedicated tour codes to access departure dates and product information via the Entire Travel Group website.

A digital version is available with printed copies to come.



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## Tasty T3 at SYD

**SYDNEY** Airport is welcoming an expanded line-up of 11 new dining experiences inside its T3 Qantas Domestic terminal.

The outlets include the iconic Icebergs restaurant, Lotus Dumpling Bar, noodle bar RaRa, Tres Tacos, Top Juice, Stitch Coffee, Azucar desserts and more.

Slated to open progressively from late 2025, the outlets will coincide with the upcoming revamped dining precinct.

## THL retail actions

**MOTORHOME** brand THL will shut down its Sydney RV Super Centre and Kratzmann RV Super Centre dealership in Brisbane as part of an accelerated effort to reduce inventory levels.

In an ASX update today, THL said the move is part of its growth roadmap introduced last month and is driven by a goal to end sales of low-margin models and consolidate the brand structure.

## TAG now into sport

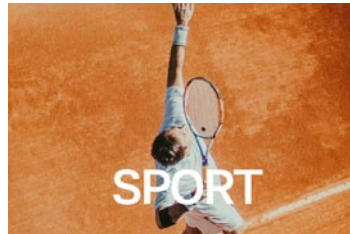
**TRAVEL** management brand TAG has introduced a new sports travel division designed to handle complex travel arrangements for professional and amateur sports organisations, teams and athletes.

Sport joins touring, production, corporate, private travel, events and investment management as TAG's newest specialist unit.

As part of the expansion, the company has launched a fully redesigned website streamlining access to the seven divisions, including detailed information on services and expertise offered.

TAG Chief Executive Jens Penny said whilst the company has been working with sporting clients for many years, it was now time to formalise the speciality.

"We offer dependable and streamlined travel services for clients on an international scale [so] welcoming the official addition of sport represents our



commitment to personalising our service offerings to meet the diverse needs of clients around the world," Penny said.

TAG's new English website will soon be translated into a variety of languages including Arabic, Spanish, Portuguese and French, with more to come.

Vice President of Entertainment Sales & Account Management, Justine Liddelow, added that key attributes of sport - teamwork, ambition and dedication - are values that are deeply embedded into TAG's company DNA and that it was uniquely equipped to serve the dynamic world of sport. *ML*

## Curfews in Nepal

**AUTHORITIES** in Nepal are enforcing curfews in various districts of the Kathmandu Valley, according to a new update from DFAT's Smartraveller.

Travellers are being warned some social media platforms have also been blocked, including Messenger and WhatsApp.

## 99% off Vietjet fares

**AUSTRALIANS** can now enjoy 99% off Eco fares to Ho Chi Minh City as part of Vietjet's 9/9 Mega Sale, departing from Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and Perth.

Available for travel from 01 Oct to 27 May 2026, the offer applies for the entire flight network.

Between 10 and 23 Sep, passengers booking Eco tickets on Australia to Vietnam flights will also receive 20kgs of free checked baggage for travel between 20 Oct to 20 Nov this year.

The sale runs from now until 2:00 AM AEST on 10 Sep.

## SAVOUR THE NORTHERN LIGHTS

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## Fiji to be the One&Only

**LUXURY** resort and private homes brand One&Only has announced it will open a new resort and private residential community in Fiji's Yasawa Islands archipelago, marking 2029 as its debut date in the popular Aussie leisure destination.

The premium resort will be nestled by a beach on Nacula Island over a 127-acre site.

According to One&Only owners Kerzner International Holdings Limited, the site is framed by tropical flora, white-sand beaches and turquoise waters, 30 minutes from the airport by sea plane.

One&Only aims to use architectural design that will integrate with the natural surroundings, prioritising ecological sensitivity and minimising environmental impact throughout its development.

"Fiji has long been a coveted addition to our global portfolio, and we're thrilled to introduce



this remarkable location to One&Only's discerning guests," Philippe Zuber, Chief Executive Officer of Kerzner said.

"Unlocking this destination aligns perfectly with our strategic growth in the Asia-Pacific region and reinforces our distinctive approach, continually elevating our commitment to delivering exceptional experiences, all while showcasing the warmth and hospitality of the Fijian spirit on a global stage."

The resort is a strategic alliance between Kerzner and BSP Life, a Fijian institutional investor.

It is the second big luxury win for Fiji in as many weeks, following Marriott's confirmation of The Ritz-Carlton's Namuka Bay debut in 2030 (**TD 28 Aug**). *DF*

## ATIA UPDATE

from Dean Long, CEO



### YESTERDAY

was a good day if you are a member of the Association, because we have delivered a win in agents being excluded

from the aviation ombuds.

Our advocacy work has saved our travel agent members from the burden of new regulations and associated expense, which was going to cost the industry between \$40 and \$100 million.

Thanks to ATIA's advocacy, those burdens have been avoided, while agent customers still retain access to the same protections as those who book direct.

This outcome didn't happen by chance - ATIA has been advocating on this issue since Sep 2023 through four rounds of formal consultations.

We have made multiple written submissions, appeared before a Senate inquiry, and held meetings with relevant ministers, departmental officials, the ACCC,

and other key stakeholders.

The decision also reflects the value of ATIA Accreditation and the ATAS program, which already provides a free and fair mediation service for consumers.

By maintaining your industry accreditation, you are demonstrating the highest standards and this collective commitment has directly helped deliver this win.

If you are not a member of ATIA, please find someone who is and say 'thank you'.

Because this is a powerful reminder that sticking together and upholding our industry standards truly benefits everyone.

If you are a member, now is the time to remind those businesses that are not yet accredited to join and reap a plethora of benefits.

Being ATIA Accredited is not just about a quality mark; it is about being part of a collective that protects and elevates the reputation of our profession.

We are your voice to government, and without us, this outcome, more than likely, would have been very different.



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## Masterful micros

**NON-GOVERNMENTAL** organisation, This is Eden, said its expansion into microgreen growing will provide nutrition and meaningful employment for locals as the human trafficking industry in Myanmar grows at an alarming rate.

Speaking at an event run at Spencer Travel Group's offices in Sydney (**TD** 05 Sep), former travel industry executive and This is Eden boss Michelle Kerr said, "Devastatingly, in 2025, human trafficking continued to be the fastest-growing criminal industry in the world, generating \$357 billion in profit."

This is Eden is growing microgreens to create a microgreen powder that is distributed amongst the community to provide vital nutrients to them.

"It's tough - the reported rate is about 30% of the Myanmar population is food insecure, so that is where this initiative was born out of - fighting human trafficking and the malnutrition effect which is a large part of that," Jacob Watts, Plant Scientist Consultant for This is Eden told the attendees.

The industry is urged to lend support to the cause - [CLICK HERE](#).

## Silver lining for new Jetstar livery

**QANTAS** Group's low-cost airline Jetstar has taken a significant environmental step forward in its transition from a predominantly silver paint scheme to a grey one.

Initially announced in May 2022 to celebrate its 18th birthday, the colour was specifically chosen to be applied with a two coat 'basecoat-clearcoat' system that was longer lasting and reduced paint weight by up to 30%, resulting in a potential fuel saving of up to 108 tonnes each year across the whole A321LR fleet and a saving of nearly 350 tonnes of CO2 emissions.

In its *Sustainability Report 2025* released last week, Qantas Group was able to provide more accurate fuel savings from the Jetstar paint scheme transition.

According to the report, the livery for these aircraft is 30kg to 40kg lighter compared to the



previous livery, reducing fuel burn and emissions on every flight.

It stated that, "the lighter paint specification was applied to five A321LRs and four A320neo deliveries and, depending on sector lengths in FY25, reduced emissions by an estimated 78 tCO2e that would have otherwise been generated".

A further five A321LR aircraft, all in the new colour, are planned for delivery during FY26.

**MEANWHILE**, the report also

noted that the Group took action after an Oct 2024 climate advocacy group complaint to the ACCC suggesting that certain climate-related statements made by Qantas potentially amounted to greenwashing (**TD** 16 Oct 2024).

"Qantas considered the stakeholder feedback and, while our climate targets and timelines have not changed, Qantas has made some changes to the sustainability information on our website," the report wrote. **DF**

## Stay for Good with OzHarvest and IHG

**IHG'S** annual 'Stay for Good' campaign supporting Australian food rescue charity, OzHarvest, and its New Zealand-based sister organisation, KiwiHarvest, has returned for its fourth year.

From now to 30 Sep, \$1 from every stay at participating IHG Hotels & Resorts across Australia and New Zealand will be donated to the charities.

Every \$1 donation can provide two meals to people in

need, reduce food waste, and prevent one kilo of food waste from going to landfill.

"As more individuals face food insecurity across Australia and New Zealand, our partnership with OzHarvest and KiwiHarvest only becomes more important," Matt Tripolone, Managing Director, Australasia & Pacific, IHG Hotels & Resorts, said.

There are 47 participating IHG Hotels & Resorts.

## EV buses hit MEL

**SIX** EV buses have been deployed in Melbourne from King Long Evolution thanks to Bus Stop Sales.

The 12-metre long low-floor electric chassis buses were finished in Australia after bus manufacturer King Long combined forces with New Zealand bus body builder Global Bus Ventures, supporting local jobs on both sides of the Tasman Sea.

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## MONEY

**THE** AUD to rise, the yen confused, and the USD drops - that's all in today's Money.

**AU\$1 = US\$0.660**

**HIGHS** of US\$0.72 for the Australian dollar next year - that is the prediction of some economists, according to a recent report in the *AFR*.

The publication quoted Bank of America rate strategist Oliver Levvingston as saying a rise to US\$0.69 by Christmas before an additional rise over US\$0.70 next year was predicted, thanks to "tailwinds for the Aussie dollar right now".

He was not alone, with a number of other economists going on record to suggest the upcoming AUD growth.

For the local economy, that is good news, for inbound travellers, that is not necessarily a great thing.

The USD continued to drop with multiple media outlets suggesting a rate cut in the country is now cemented, while the yen is a currency to watch after the Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba resigned having not even completed a year leading the country.

*Wholesale rates this morning.*

US	\$0.660
UK	£0.487
NZ	\$1.110
Euro	€0.561
Japan	¥97.18
Thailand	฿20.913
China	¥4.704
South Africa	11.531
Canada	\$0.910
Bitcoin	0.00000589

## India comes to town



**THE** Australia India Travel & Tourism Council (AITTC), in partnership with Far Horizon Tours and Taj Hotels, recently hosted an interactive product showcase and dinner for travel industry guests.

Far Horizon Tours Chairman, Sanjay Basu, and Assistant VP, Pankaj Arora, travelled from India to update the local trade on the company's latest offerings, including niche touring experiences and river cruising on the Brahmaputra River and Kerala backwaters, operated by MV Mahabaahu and MV Vaikundam.

Basu told *Travel Daily* that as leading specialists in India, Far Horizon Tours has had the privilege of creating curated itineraries for a number of well-known celebrities.

The evening also highlighted Taj Hotels' international developments, with new properties set to open in Thimphu, Phobjikha Valley (Gangtey) and Paro, Bhutan, later in the year.

Taj Director of Global Sales,

Australia & New Zealand, Thushara Liyanarachchi, also shared that the group has opened more than 120 hotels across its brands in recent years, with over 80 currently in various stages of development.

**Pictured** at Manjit's Indian Restaurant in Darling Harbour are: Vishnu Daram, AITTC; Pankaj Arora, Far Horizon Tours; Sandip Hor, AITTC; Sanjay Basu, Far Horizon Tours; Thushara Liyanarachchi, Taj Hotels; and Phillip Boniface, AITTC. *AB*

## VA Perth E190

**VIRGIN** Australia Group has marked a major milestone in its fleet development, with its first E190-E2 jet touching down in Perth this week from the Embraer's factory in Brazil.

The E190-E2 will primarily service Virgin Australia Regional Airlines' charter flights across Western Australia, however its dual-class layout gives the company the flexibility to operate regular passenger services when charter demand is quieter.

## YTL loves Malaysia

**YTL** Hotels has acquired Thistle Hotel in Johor Bahru, Malaysia, deepening its investment in the popular Asian country.

Located in the CBD, Thistle Hotel will undergo a major refurbishment and relaunch before welcoming guests next year, featuring premium accommodation, elevated dining options, meeting and event spaces and leisure activities.

YTL Hotels owns and manages resorts, hotels and boutique experiences across Malaysia, Thailand, Japan, Australia, France, the Netherlands and the UK.

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