

Today's issue of TD

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

Tauk adds to river

TAUCK has announced plans to add two new riverboats to its fleet in 2027, expanding further on its two ships to be launched in 2026 (**TD** 04 Mar).

The 125-metre Seine riverboat will feature a sun deck with swimming pool and bar, panoramic views from Arthur's casual dining venue and an innovative wellness area.

Meanwhile, the 80-metre Douro rivership will join sister ship *ms Andorinha* on the Portugal river.

"Every detail on these new ships has been designed to elevate the guest experience while cruising along two of Europe's most storied rivers," said Tauk CEO Jennifer Tombaugh.

Int'l trips grow by 290k

THE number of trips taken by Aussies in Jul grew by more than 290,000 when compared to Jun, new ABS figures have showed.

Just over 1.2 million Aussies took a short-term overseas jaunt in Jul, with Indonesia leading the way again with 176,330 trips.

Across the Tasman, New Zealand took second spot with 125,790 trips made, ahead of the 123,510 recorded during the same month last year.

While New Zealand has played second fiddle to Indonesia - most notably Bali - in recent years, the country has consistently challenged for top spot, efforts that will be assisted by Qantas committing significantly more



capacity in the future (see **p4**).

New Zealand has also recently ramped up efforts to promote the North Island, bringing out a combined delegation to Australia earlier this month to make it more top-of-mind with Aussie travellers (**TD** 02 Sep).

The embattled United States managed to make ground in Jul, with Aussie trips rising from 54,240 in Jun to 70,570 in Jul.

Despite the rallying numbers, the United States was still well short of pre-pandemic numbers for Jul, which in 2019 saw close to 105,000 trips made. **AB**

An Inspiring offer

INSPIRING Vacations' exclusive agent offer allows advisors to travel with a friend for half price - see how on **page 11**.

Yacht messing around

PONANT Explorations Group has launched a new commercial brand, Ponant Yachting, which will operate the company's fleet of catamarans.

The *Spirit of Ponant* and *La Desirade* vessels will sit under the Ponant Yachting brand, with the company to add a third ship, *Spirit of Ponant II*, joining the fleet late next year.

Built by French shipyard Lagoon, *Spirit of Ponant II* will be based in French Polynesia, and will accommodate up to 10 guests in five double staterooms.

She will be available exclusively for full private charter, from €64,000 (A\$113,000).

The Ponant Yachting experience will see guests hosted by a crew of four: captain, first mate, chef, and hostess, for an all-inclusive experience featuring exclusive itineraries, personalised activities, refined gastronomy, a selection of wine and cocktails, bespoke menus, and more.

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Nepal back online

TRIBHUVAN International Airport in Kathmandu has reopened, two days after its closure due to security concerns stemming from the ongoing anti-corruption protests led by Gen Z. Smartraveller said airlines may not resume normal flight operations quickly, and is warning Aussies to avoid the airport until their flight is confirmed. Travellers should contact their airline to confirm schedules.

Agents seek automation

DEMAND for greater access to AI and personalisation technology is high among as many as 92% of travel professionals to meet key operational challenges, such as rising competition and the higher expectations of clients.

The finding came from a survey of 1,300 travel professionals from Europe, North America, Asia, the GCC and Latin America commissioned by B2B travel booking platform RateHawk.

Other key outcomes saw 34% of respondents identify AI as a "game changer", with the tech being looked upon favourably by agents in larger companies.

Ward to Jones & Co

NICK Ward (pictured) has been appointed to the Head of Sales position at travel representation company Jones & Co.

Ward has more than 20 years of experience in senior travel roles across STA Travel, Tourism Victoria, and Amadeus.

Jones & Co cited his passion for connecting global travel experiences with Aussies and his deep expertise across luxury and corporate travel as key strengths he will bring to the business.

He was also a candidate for the Greens in the Wentworth electorate at the most recent federal election.



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Accor Air NZ pact

THE Accor Live Limitless (ALL) loyalty program has partnered with Air New Zealand to turn hotel stays into adventures.

ALL members can now convert reward points into Air New Zealand's Airpoint Dollars to redeem on flights and more.

Conversions will be accepted at 2,000 ALL points to \$30, with those who convert their points between 10 and 30 Sep to receive 50% bonus Airpoints.

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The survey found the vast majority of agents are happy in their jobs but crave access to AI and better technology to ensure they can better compete, source the best deals for their clients, and earn higher commissions.

Many respondents expressed frustration that clients are still expecting pre-pandemic pricing, making many budgets unrealistic.

RateHawk Managing Director Astrid Kastberg (**pictured**) said agents are particularly looking to offload repetitive and mundane tasks to technology so they can focus on serving their clients.

"Travel professionals believe that smart tools can help them manage administrative work and other time-consuming tasks more efficiently," Kastberg said.

"In a rapidly changing market, innovations can help them stay competitive and deliver greater value to their clients, which is why supporting travel agents in technology adoption is so important," she added. *ML*

T'way into Trinity

SOUTH Korean airline T'way Air, which flies three times weekly between Incheon and Sydney, will rebrand to Trinity Airways in the first half of next year.

The move comes after investor Daemyung Sono secured majority control after acquiring the stake owned by T'way Holdings.

AGENT INCENTIVE

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Cruise plugs in en masse

THE number of Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA) member ships with the ability to connect to onshore power supply (OPS) has more than doubled since 2018, according to its latest annual Environmental Technologies and Practices (ETP) report that dropped today.

In 2018, 55 ships had OPS capability, while today, 166 ships are now able to plug in at port, a 12% increase from the prior year.

OPS capability is important as it allows ships to turn off their engines while in port for emissions reductions of up to 98%, depending on the mix of energy sources.

The report stated that by 2036, 273 member ships will be OPS compatible, based on retrofitting and new orders.

CLIA also outlined other environmental wins for the industry including 234 ships now being equipped with advanced



wastewater treatment, a 4% gain year-on-year, 23 ships with fuel-flexible engines planned to be in service by the end of the year, and 32 dual-fuel ships forecast to launch by 2036, including seven capable of using methanol and 25 of using LNG.

"Cruise lines are early adopters and innovators of maritime technology - examples include advanced wastewater systems, onshore power supply, air lubrication systems, and the newest generation of dual fuel engines," said Bud Darr, president and CEO of CLIA (**pictured**). *DF*

Virgin most trusted

FOR the third year in a row, Virgin Australia has been named the Most Trusted Travel & Tourism Brand in the 2025 Roy Morgan Trusted Brand Awards.

"The 'threepeat' for Virgin Australia shows the airline has powered out of the pandemic period with a reputation for trust far ahead of its rivals in the sector," said Roy Morgan CEO Michele Levine.

According to Levine, travellers described the airline as "down-to-earth, approachable, and with a good track record".

It was also noted as being the most reliable of airlines in terms of flight times, and quick to compensate in the face of cancellations without being prompted, she added.

The awards are based on Roy Morgan's research from thousands of Australians, highlighting brands that consumers trust across a wide range of industries.

Thompson honoured

FORMER ATIA (then AFTA) Chairman and Helloworld executive Mike Thompson was this week awarded his Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) in the General Division (**pictured**), as part of the Governor General's King's Birthday honours list.

The ceremony took place at Government House Sydney, and Thompson's medal was pinned by NSW Governor Margaret Beazley.

Thompson was rewarded for his "services to the travel and tourism industry" through his long-time leadership positions.



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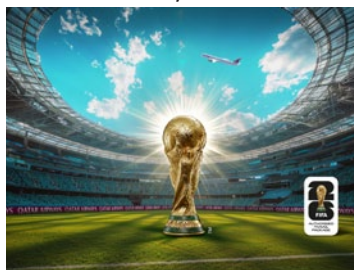


QR fuels football

QATAR Airways and Qatar Airways Holidays have reintroduced FIFA World Cup travel packages ahead of next year's tri-nation event that will be held across Canada, Mexico and the United States.

Qatar Airways Holidays allows fans to secure ticket-inclusive and refundable packages following the progress of their specific team before the official draw takes place with the use of the 'Follow My Team Series'.

The packages are comprehensive and include arrival and departure transfers for travel between Host Cities, plus return match-day transfers.



QF A220 heads overseas

QANTAS will significantly ramp up capacity and services between Australia and New Zealand over the coming year, with the carrier's new Airbus A220 set to embark on its first international route.

The narrow-body aircraft, which first began flying for QantasLink in Mar last year (**TD** 01 Mar 2024), will be deployed on Brisbane to Wellington flights from Feb 2026 (**TD** breaking news yesterday), replacing the Embraer E190 and Boeing 737 on the route.

The move marks the first time the aircraft will fly internationally since entering service for Qantas, aside from once being promised for QF's Darwin to Singapore services, before later being replaced with Boeing 737s.

The Qantas Group will also add 210,000 seats to its trans-Tasman capacity across four routes, three of which are flown by its low-cost offshoot Jetstar.

JQ will take off on a new route



from Brisbane to Queenstown from Jun 2026, operating a seasonal thrice-weekly schedule in line with the NZ ski season.

The LCC will also increase flights between Brisbane and Auckland to twice daily, while Melbourne to Christchurch will shift to a daily year-round service, and Sydney to Auckland will grow from eight to up to 12 per week.

"The A220 is our newest aircraft and has some of the highest customer satisfaction scores in the fleet, so we're particularly excited to be offering the experience to customers travelling internationally from Brisbane-Wellington next year," said Qantas International Chief Executive, Cam Wallace. **ML**

Hawaii wraps show

ALOHA Down Under, the annual B2B roadshow for Hawaii, has concluded for 2025, with travel trade executives in Auckland, Melbourne, Brisbane and Sydney joining 14 leading suppliers from the US state's various islands.

Visitor numbers from Jan to Jul 2025 were slightly lower than last year, influenced by factors such as a 5% reduction in airlift.

Australians are staying longer, however, with an average of nearly nine days per visit, and strong loyalty, with 55% of them returning visitors.

Bali is going ahead

TRAVELMANAGERS' (TM) conference in Bali next week will still go ahead, despite recent flooding and weather conditions.

"Rest assured that we are closely monitoring the situation with our local venue partners, suppliers and security consultant," TM said.

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\$100 million for Queensland

QUEENSLAND'S tourism industry has welcomed a recent \$100 million investment from the State Government, set to coincide with this month's upcoming World Tourism Day.

The Queensland Tourism Industry Council (QTIC) celebrated the global commemoration of tourism at The Star Gold Coast, where an \$80 million Tourism Icons Investment Fund was announced.

There was also \$20 million set apart for Queensland's Regional Tourism Infrastructure Fund to support projects in destinations outside the state's South East.

The funds are designed to deliver transformative attractions, infrastructure, and experiences that showcase Queensland's natural assets; as well as improve accessibility to rural destinations, and driving new experiences.

Queensland's tourism sector is also welcoming a new four-year,



\$6.8 million partnership between QTIC and the govt, which aims to deliver targeted programs aligned with its Destination 2045 strategy.

QTIC Chief Executive Officer Natassia Wheeler said the announcements represent a major vote of confidence in Queensland's visitor economy.

She said the new partnership underscores the importance of industry collaboration. *MS*

Pictured are QTIC Chairwoman Elsa D'Alessio and Wheeler with state Minister for Tourism Andrew Powell.

APT in the Black

APT Group has appointed BLACK Communications to lead the business' PR and communications in Australia and New Zealand across its brands APT Luxury Travel, Travelmarvel, Captain's Choice, Antarctica Flights and Botanica.

The agency has previously worked across travel brands including Belmond, one&only Resorts and Virtuoso, in addition to luxury brands such as Balenciaga, Moncler and Hublot.

New Eurail incentive

A NEW Rail Europe incentive has launched for agents selling Switzerland includes adding extra days in first class this winter.

Available from now until 30 Nov, agents can also offer clients a four-day pass, with a free fifth day, or choose an eight-day pass and enjoy 10 days in total.

The promo is valid for travel from Oct 2025 through Mar 2026.

ACA board shuffle

THE Australian Cruise Association (ACA) has had a board reshuffle off the back of its Annual General Meeting last week, welcoming newly elected board members APT's Chief Product and Operations Officer Mladen Vukic and Joanne Brown, Commercial Development Manager at Intercoast Shoreside and Port Services.

Meanwhile, Brendan Connell from Port of Brisbane and Andrew McKinnon from South Australian Tourism Commission were both re-elected for another two-year term.

The board also farewelled James Coughlan from Shorex Australia and Karlie Cavanagh from Inchcape Shipping Services, while acknowledging the leadership of outgoing Chair, Philip Holliday.

In the coming weeks, the ACA executive will make announcements regarding who will be the new Chair, Deputy Chair and Treasurer.

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Thursday 11th September 2025

Fresh set of eyes on Sydney



THE Sydney Tower Eye has unveiled a new-look observation deck experience, featuring new interiors, more comfortable seating zones and enhanced viewing opportunities.

To celebrate the relaunch, visitors can access affordable \$29 tickets to experience the transformed space.

"The Sydney Tower Eye has always been the ultimate place to take in the city's most breathtaking views," Merlin Entertainments ANZ Vice President Ian Wood.

"With the reimagined observation deck, we've created a space that feels contemporary and welcoming - designed to elevate the experience and give guests a new way to connect with Sydney," he added.

Inspired by the natural world, the new design seeks to blend warm, earthy tones reflecting sandstone cliffs and bushland

with ocean-inspired hues and airy textures that bring a sense of lightness and fluidity.

The Observation Deck is situated 250 metres above Sydney's streets and provides 360-degree views of the city. **AB**

Explora 2027-28

MSC Group's lifestyle luxury brand Explora Journeys has unveiled its 2027-28 Journeys Collection, which spans five continents and features the debut of its fifth vessel *Explora V*.

Sailing from Sep 2027 to May 2028, the new collection includes close to 100 sailing 59 countries and nearly 200 destinations - spearheaded by its Asia debut.

Overnight stays in Tokyo, Osaka, Hong Kong, Shanghai, Naha, Ha Long Bay, Ho Chi Minh City and Bali are on offer, while its newest *Explora V* ship will explore the Med in her maiden season.

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ATAC links with Intrepid

EXCLUSIVE

THE Australian Travel Agents Cooperative (ATAC) has created a new philanthropic platform called Travel Kind, marking the launch with a debut agreement with the Intrepid Foundation.

Announced at its recent annual conference in Adelaide, The Blue Dragon Foundation was selected by ATAC as the first charity recipient in the Intrepid tie-up, an international not-for-profit that rescues and supports children in Vietnam from the scourges of human trafficking and slavery.

Under the deal, ATAC members can choose to opt in and send their clients the details about how to make donations, using email collateral that the cooperative has provided.

To get the ball rolling, ATAC's executive announced a \$1,000 donation to the Blue Dragon Children's Foundation.

Speaking with **Travel Daily** about the exciting charity



development, General Manager Michelle Emerton said launching Travel Kind had been on the agenda for close to a decade.

"This idea has been on the whiteboard for ATAC since 2016... and now that we are doing really well we asked ourselves how we can do something different to what everyone else is doing," Emerton explained.

"This is offering more of a global arm to our business, everyone is really good at contributing to local communities through sporting clubs and those sort of things, but the [Travel Kind] platform really takes those efforts to the next level."

Moving forward, Emerton said ATAC will poll its members on what charities to support next year for full transparency. **AB**

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Pick your Oceania perks



A CHOICE between two additional amenities will become available for travellers making new bookings on Oceania Cruises after 17 Sep, the line revealed.

As part of its new 'Your World Included' program, guests can select from a shore excursion credit of US\$600 per guest, depending on the length of the voyage booked.

This credit can be applied to any of more than 8,000 small-group immersive adventures visited by the line around the world.

The second choice on offer includes beer and wine during lunch and dinner seatings.

The new benefits are in addition to the existing suite of onboard amenities such as unlimited wi-fi, free speciality dining and included crew gratuities.

"This is not another passing promotion; it's a brand promise and reinforces the incredible value of the Oceania Cruises

experience, giving our guests the luxury of even more choice," said Oceania Cruises Chief Luxury Officer, Jason Montague.

Oceania Cruises is currently enjoying a rapid phase of growth, having recently taken delivery of *Allura*, its second newbuild vessel to join the fleet in three years, following *Vista* in 2023.

Further, as older vessels such as *Regatta* and *Insignia* leave the fleet on long-term charters, the line has also committed to a further four newbuilds to be known as the Sonata class, with the first two - *Sonata* and *Arietta* - arriving in 2027 and 2029.

The line is also working to elevate its brand positioning to an ultra-premium line, with a sweeping review of its onboard guest experience now underway.

Onboard entertainment is one aspect to be reimaged, with a suite of new original shows (**CW** 01 May) set to be rolled out. **ML**

Thai lion mauling

A ZOOKEEPER has been mauled to death in front of horrified tourists by lions after stepping out of his car at a safari park in Thailand.

The tragic incident happened at Safari World in Bangkok, which calls itself one of Asia's largest open-air zoos.

Media reports contend the zookeeper was attacked by six or seven of the big cats.

An unnamed senior zoo official told local media that all of the park's lions were licensed.

France turbulence

STRIKES and protests are scheduled across France until at least 18 Sep, with transport disruptions expected, the Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade is warning.

The Smartraveller service said Australians should monitor the media for updates and follow the advice of local authorities.

Travellers are continuing to be urged to exercise a high degree of caution in France.

Rail gets luxurious

RAILBOOKERS has launched its first-ever luxury rail week, celebrating five-star train travel.

The week-long event will begin on 15 Sep, with Railbookers' collection of luxury trains paired with independent itineraries, all with flexible departures up to two years out.

There is also \$600 in savings available on certain journeys.

TIME to celebrate

LAST night, industry mentorship program TIME celebrated its 15-year anniversary since it was first founded by Chair Penny Spencer.

During the evening, past and present mentors, mentees, committee and board members reflected on the impact TIME had on the industry and their careers.

Former mentee, Meg Hill, who was part of the first group of graduates, shared her experiences with the audience.

"TIME was absolutely a powerful catalyst in my journey, both professionally and personally and it gave me permission and structure to step outside the day-to-day and focus on what could be," she said, noting her former mentor, the late Denise Blackmore.

Meanwhile, several longstanding mentors were also recognised for their services.

"It does take a village and we've got a teenager now who we want to mature and become more impactful with age," Spencer (**pictured**) said of the program.

"I am really looking forward to taking TIME into adulthood - that's all a parent wants, to guide and nurture their baby, so here's to the next 15 years."



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HA appoints CEO

ALASKA Air Group has promoted its Senior VP of Public Affairs and Sustainability at Alaska Airlines, Diana Birkett Rakow (pictured) to CEO of Hawaiian Airlines, effective Oct 29.

Rakow will succeed Joe Sprague in the position, who will retire after taking on the top role just over a year ago.

The first woman to hold the position, Rakow will be based in Honolulu and will be charged with the long-term performance and advancement of the Hawaiian Airlines brand and Alaska Air Group's business following the merger of the entities.

She will continue to report to Ben Minicucci, CEO of Alaska Air Group, and remain on the company's Executive Committee.

The departing Sprague was named CEO to guide Hawaiian Airlines through the process of obtaining a single operating certificate (SOC) from the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) with Alaska Airlines.



Adina hits Top End goal



ADINA Hotels recently delivered a dose of community spirit to the Northern Territory with the launch of Darwin's inaugural Adina Community Clinic at the MWT Hockey Centre.

As the official accommodation partner of Hockey Australia, Adina invests in grassroots initiatives that are designed to inspire the next generation of professional athletes.

The Darwin clinic welcomed more than 200 local children and their families, offering a rare opportunity to train alongside some of the nation's top hockey players, including talents from the Hockeyroos, Kookaburras, and Territory Stingers teams.

"These clinics are about more than sport, they are about creating inclusive, memorable experiences that bring communities together and inspire future champions," said Brett Skinner, General Manager of Adina Darwin Waterfront.

"Our three-year partnership with Hockey Australia is a reflection of TFE Hotels' long-term commitment to community building, and our Adina Community Clinics are a powerful way to connect with families, showcase our brand values, and support the growth of hockey from the grassroots up."

Adina is also the official partner of Hockey Australia's suite of National Hockey Championships, including the Indoor Championships and Country Championships. **AB**

CI chases status

CHINA Airlines has become the first Taiwan airline to adopt a status points membership system, which will go live for customers toward the end of this year.

Members will be able to use miles to redeem complimentary fares and cabin upgrades, as well as select products and services.



Window Seat

AS NORTH Korea prepares to ramp up efforts to relaunch its tourism sector, locally trained tour guides are reportedly being given very specific instructions about what to say.

According to local sources, the training program emphasises basic attitudes and professional standards that all tour guides must adhere to, including having to memorise phrases that don't sound too South Korean.

These include exchanging the word 'haembegeo' (hamburger) to 'dajin-gogi gyeoppang' (double bread with ground beef).

'Eoreumboseungi' (ice confection) has also been mandated instead of 'aiseukeurim' (ice cream), while karaoke machines - which enjoy widespread popularity in the South - needs to be referred to as "on-screen accompaniment machines."

"The goal is to teach tourism professionals to consciously use North Korean vocabulary and expressions while carefully avoiding South Korean-style expressions and foreign loanwords they may have been using unknowingly," the anonymous source told Asian news site *Daily NK*.

What word in North Korean means 'urgent refund'?

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FACTS Fest unveils 2025 program

THE Festival of Aviation Corporate Travel Summits (FACTS) has unveiled its program for the upcoming event on 25-26 Nov at ICC Sydney.

FACTS Festival brings together four summits - the Aviation Futures Summit, Corporate Travel Summit, Business Events Summit, and Travel Payments Summit - with over 100 speakers and 25 sessions set to hit the stage.

Speakers include Simon Hickey, CEO, Western Sydney Airport; Robert Dougan, Executive General Manager, Strategy & Culture, Tourism Australia; Andre Moten, Chief Commercial Officer, Connections Travel Group; Leon Burman, Managing Director, Tribe Travel & Events; Craig Southee, Regional General Manager - QLD & WA, CT Connections; Agnes Tsoa-Lee, Corporate T&E Program Specialist, Financial Services,



Optus; and Massimo Morin, Global Head of Travel, AWS Travel & Hospitality.

Organisers are expecting 1,500 delegates to be in attendance.

Festival Director, Derek Sadubin said, "FACTS Festival is about convergence - by uniting aviation, corporate travel, events, and technology, we are creating conversations and collaborations that don't happen anywhere else.

"This year's program will inspire, challenge, and set the agenda for the industries we serve."

Topics up for discussion include the trade outlook, the future of work, creating memorable business events, indigenous sourcing, the seamless delegate journey and how AI is reshaping the customer journey.

For more information and tickets, **CLICK HERE**. **DF**

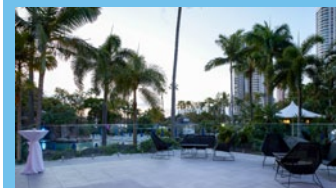
Golden gallery

JW Marriott Gold Coast Resort & Spa has unveiled Lagoon Gallery, a new events venue that combines versatility, natural light and lagoon-front views.

The venue spans 335sqm indoors and 330sqm outdoors, with floor-to-ceiling glass doors opening onto a private terrace.

Thanks to an adaptable layout, vehicle access is possible, with JW Marriott suggesting it will make "a compelling choice for car launches and product showcases", plus more.

Bookings are now open.



Entries to the ABEA 2025 now open

ENTRIES to the Australian Business Events Association (ABEA) Awards for 2025 have officially opened.

Returning for the second year, the awards recognise and celebrate the people, companies, teams and innovations shaping Australia's business events sector.

This year there are 26 awards up for grabs - new categories include Event Manager of the Year, Operations Person of the

Year, and Sales, Marketing or Business Development Person of the Year.

Melissa Brown, CEO, ABEA, said the awards spotlight what makes the business events industry powerful.

"The Awards offer finalists and winners national exposure, increased credibility among stakeholders, and access to a high-impact evening of networking," she said.

To enter, **CLICK HERE**.

Vic aims to boost multicultural business

THE Victorian Government has announced the Multicultural Business Precinct Revitalisation Program that will offer significant grants to Victorian local councils to support improvements to multicultural business precincts within their municipality.

Local councils can apply for grants between \$50,000 and \$250,000 per multicultural business precinct, and funds can be used to upgrade



visitor spaces, improve public infrastructure, install wayfinding signage and public art, create more inviting shopfronts and more.

Traders and business associations are encouraged to contact their local council to show support for grant.

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Experienced hotel executive **Paula Tannous** has been appointed by **Accor** to the role of Regional Director of Hotel Performance, Pacific, and will oversee the Sofitel, MGallery and Emblems brands. Tannous holds three decades of experience in hospitality, having held senior roles with Caesars Entertainment, Fairmont, and IHG Hotels and Resorts.

Dreamlines-Cruise1st Group, which operates the Cruise1st and CruiseAway brands in Australia, has welcomed **Nishank Gopalkrishnan** as the company's new Chief Executive Officer. Previously, Gopalkrishnan held senior roles with TUI Musement, Make My Trip and Triposo.

Tasked with leading the cruise line's marketing and digital strategy, **Lisa Warner** has been welcomed onboard by Hurtigruten as its new Chief Marketing and Digital Officer. Warner joins the Norwegian coastal cruise brand with 20 years of senior leadership roles at various brands.

TFE Hotels has appointed **Peter Minatsis** as the pre-opening General Manager at **Hannah St. Hotel Melbourne**, as the city's new property in Southbank prepares to open this summer. Minatsis brings many years of experience in hospitality, having worked in Australia, Fiji and Canada.

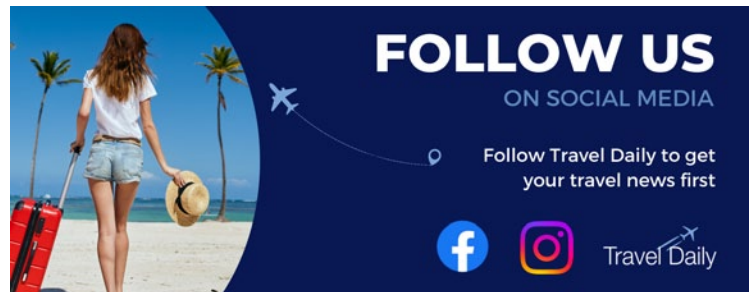
Youthful design-led accommodation brand **Yotel** has appointed **Phil Andreopoulos** as the company's new Chief Executive Officer. The new leader has set his sights on doubling the brand's hotel portfolio to more than 15,000 rooms by 2030. Andreopoulos joins Yotel after a distinguished career at Marriott International, where he held multiple senior roles across Europe, the Middle East and Africa.

Ahead of its upcoming grand opening, **Jake Guilfoyle** has been named General Manager of Accor's **25hours Hotel The Olympia**. The new brand brings its neighbourhood vibe to Sydney's Paddington, with Guilfoyle bringing over a decade in luxury lifestyle hotels, with his experience including roles at Hyde Melbourne Plaza and QT Singapore.

Travel representation and marketing house **Jones & Co** has hired experienced strategist **Nick Ward** as its new Head of Sales. Ward brings 20 years in senior travel roles, specialising in technology and advocacy, having worked with STA Travel, Tourism Victoria and Amadeus.

Four new General Managers have been hired by **Capella Hotel Group** to manage its Asian portfolio. Leading the group is **Paul Jackson**, who joins **Capella Singapore** from after over a decade as GM at Claridge's in London. Elsewhere, **Christian Jaquier** will take the reins at **Capella Ubud**; **Andy Lio** will head up **Capella at Galaxy Macau**, while **Roman Angulo** has been promoted to GM at **Capella Patina Tianjin**.

With more than 25 years of international luxury hospitality experience and operational excellence, **Sasha Tyas** will take the reins at **Anantara Kihavah Maldives Villas** as its new General Manager.



VA trains to the MAX



VIRGIN Australia has signed a contract with simtech company **CAE** to acquire a B737MAX Full-Flight Simulator.

The deal marked the third CAE-manufactured device in operation for Virgin.

CAE said the addition strengthens its presence in the region, with the company having partnered with the carrier for more than 20 years.

The airline's pilots also currently train on CAE simulators at VA's facility in Jandakot, WA (**TD** 26 Jun 2023).

Virgin has committed to adding 13 new Boeing 737-8 aircraft, which are expected to be delivered though to Jun.

This is on top of the one Virgin received in the prior fiscal year, and the six it added in the 2024 financial year.

VA also operates 79 Boeing 737-800s and nine Boeing 737-700s, as part of a simplified fleet of the aircraft type, which are replacing its Airbus A320s.

Virgin's fleet age is currently 13.4 years, and 12.6 years for its Boeing 737-fleet. **MS**

A slam dunk Choice

CHOICE Hotels has announced it will sponsor Australia's National Basketball League (NBL) as its accommodation partner.

Fans will see Choice integrated across the NBL experience, from LED courtside signage to broadcast integration, digital activations, and exclusive player-led content.

These high-impact touchpoints will be supported by fan-focused campaigns that drive audiences to choicehotels.com.

The Choice Sports Travel Program will also be a game-changer for the sport's NBL1 minor league and the community clubs it supports, offering discounts off best available rates for registered teams, and a rebate back to their clubs.

"This partnership gives us a platform to showcase our hotel brands alongside elite athletes, 10 NBL teams and 76 NBL1 teams while also delivering tangible benefits," Choice Senior Director Commercial & Revenue Management Kari Hunter said.




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