

JNTO wraps events

THE Japan National Tourism Organization (JNTO) welcomed more than 320 agents during its roadshow in Sydney and Brisbane last week.

Attendees connected face-to-face with over 40 suppliers, enjoying authentic Japanese cuisine and live traditional music while exploring the country's latest tourism offerings.

Both events finished on a high note with a prize draw for return flights to Japan. *JM*

Vic needs events overhaul

VICTORIA lacks a strategic direction and overarching policy to take full advantage of business events, a discussion paper prepared by events expert Simon Thewlis has claimed.

While acknowledging Victoria has plenty of talent and ambition, the report contended there was no shared vision for what Victoria wants to achieve through its events capability, including no agreed-to priorities and no useful way of measuring success.

"Without a clear strategy, decisions tend to be reactive rather than deliberate," it said.

"Investment is made on a case-by-case basis, only some of the benefits are considered, opportunities to build long-term capability are missed, and events are rarely leveraged systematically for innovation."

Prior to the pandemic, Victoria was the "clear leader" for national events in Australia, however based on several key indicators, by 2024, the state had been overtaken by NSW and Qld.

Victoria slipped to third spot in the areas of event visitor expenditure, event visitor



nights, and share of the national business events expenditure.

The report also took aim at the fragmented nature of coordination, with no single agency responsible for the events sector as a whole, leading to a diffuse leadership model.

Among the report's suggestions to arrest the trend is to create a division called Events Victoria.

The body would provide the missing focus by taking a whole-of-industry perspective. *AB*

Albatross expands

ALBATROSS Tours has announced a major expansion of its team, following record growth for the company.

The brand's sales and marketing divisions are growing, with Harry Sargant promoted to director of sales, where he will lead new regional sales managers for New South Wales and Queensland, which are being hired for now.

James Hewlett, who has led Albatross' sales and marketing teams over the past 12 months, will now transition back to leading the latter division with a sharp focus on long-term brand strategy and to spearhead the next phase of digital expansion and loyalty innovation.

These functions have been bolstered by two new arrivals: loyalty specialist Nicole Gruver and digital marketing executive Heidi Nguyen. *MS*

WEB clarifies audit

WEB Travel Group has assured the market that its various businesses are subject to tax reviews and audits every year.

The note on the ASX today followed an update on Fri to confirm its Spanish subsidiary was being audited by the Spanish Tax Agency (*TD* 06 Feb).

In the same update, Web Travel Group said that it is expecting FY27 bookings growth to remain in double digits, while TTV margins will remain at 6.5%. *AB*

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Seniors expert debut

SINGAPORE-BASED travel company Greytt has announced the launch of its Greytt Journeys platform in the local market.

It offers city, cultural and wellness journeys for Aussies aged 50-plus who are travelling across Asia Pacific, with a focus on comfort and accessibility. *JM*

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Cherry blossoms clipped

IN A major blow to thousands of Aussies planning to visit Japan in Apr, the country's govt has decided to axe the Arakurayama Sengen Park cherry blossom festival near Mount Fuji.

The decision to cancel the iconic gathering - attracting around 200,000 tourists a year - was primarily due to increasing incidents of disruptive behaviour from visitors in recent years.

Among the unsavoury incidents noted in the announcement were travellers defecating in private yards, trespassing and littering, Fujiyoshida Mayor Shigeru Horiuchi detailed.

"To protect the dignity and living environment of our citizens, we have decided to bring the curtain down on the 10-year-old festival," he added.

Speaking to *Travel Daily* about the decision, Australian Travel Industry Association (ATIA) CEO Dean Long said his recent interactions with Japanese



stakeholders made it clear the country was stepping up efforts to fight over-tourism.

"I attended the Australian-Japan Dialogue last week (TD 04 Feb), and...there was a clear focus from Japanese authorities on managing visitor numbers and addressing issues related to overtourism and behaviour in popular destinations," Long said.

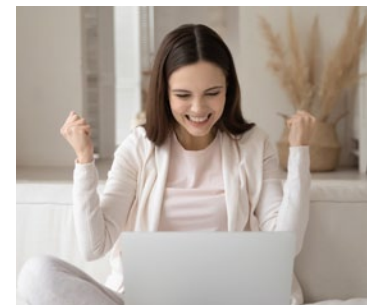
"The trend is likely to continue as Japan balances tourism with community expectations and sustainability goals.

Long added that this was also a "key reason" for partnering with Fukushima Province and signing a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to help members find destinations outside of hotspots like Kyoto, Osaka and Tokyo. *AB*

Alaskan nightmare

ALASKAN Dream Cruises, owned by Allen Marine Tours, has shut down after 15 years of operations and will begin processing full refunds this week, according to local reports.

The Sitka-based cruise line operated five- to eight-night voyages on four small ships. *JM*



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JB throws down the revenue gauntlet

JOURNEY Beyond CEO Chris Tallent (pictured) has flagged more expansion for the private equity-owned business at its annual showcase held in Sydney last week, this year themed 'Are You Ready to Journey Beyond'?

Tallent revealed significant growth, with the company expanding from 16 to 20 brands and a forecast that - in two years' time - will have annual revenue approaching \$1 billion.

"The future is bright, and we're boldly committed to standing here in two years' time, celebrating something extraordinary; with annual revenue approaching \$1 billion," he enthused.

"We talked last year about our aspirations for further growth - we really wanted to lift the company to another level, and it was already pretty big.

"We've doubled in size, literally since last year, which is a big

achievement in 12 months."

He also revealed the recently launched Monarto Safari Resort, a short drive outside of Adelaide, had already been a significant driver of growth.

"Monarto's gone off - we talked about launching this incredible resort partnership - we've had around 90% occupancy for the last five months and it's only been open nine months."

Tallent also suggested that Journey Beyond would continue to look at opportunities in New Zealand after its acquisition of NZ-based Grand Pacific Tours.

In terms of the Voyages Indigenous Tourism acquisition, Tallent reported that completion was expected in just a matter of weeks, with CEO Matt Cameron-Smith in attendance at the upbeat season launch.

MEANWHILE, a further major announcement on the day was a \$30 million investment into



the Cruise Whitsundays' guest experience, highlighted by the evolution and refurbishment of Reefworld and its relaunch as an overnight-only pontoon.

It is reserved exclusively for Reefsleeper and Reefsuites guests so they can connect deeper with the Great Barrier Reef. *DF*

Timmins' CEO gig

JACQUI Timmins has been named the CEO of ICMI Speakers & Entertainers, a leading agency that organises speakers for events across Australia and NZ.

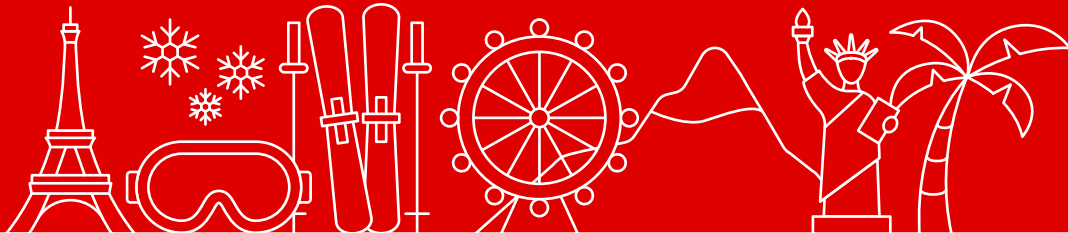
The company's new leader (pictured) is well-known to the industry, having previously held the role of general manager global sales development at Qantas, as well as MD for Egecia Australia under Expedia Group.

"Over the coming months, my focus will be on getting across the business, spending time with the team, our managing consultants, our talent and our clients, and identifying where we can continue to strengthen what ICMI does best," Timmins said. *AB*



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Best of the best celebrate



OVER 70 travel industry executives alongside a significant amount of advisors came together last Thu to celebrate the ‘Best of the Best’ over dinner at the Ace Hotel in Sydney.

The event, now 15 years old, was hosted by seven brands, The Ritz-Carlton Yacht Collection, Inspired Luxury, The Legion Seminyak, TAJ, Como, Anthony Knox & Associates and Uniworld Boutique River Cruises.

Guests were treated to an array of cocktails before stepping inside the dining room to enjoy a three-course dinner, which included a range of sides.

The brands were represented by Tony Knox of Tony Knox and Associates, who kicked off formalities, Lynne Ireland from Inspired Luxury, Thushara Liyanarachchi of Taj Hotels, Jen Pagett from Uniworld, Anastasia Kotanidis representing Ritz Carlton Yacht Collection, Brenda Nash from The Legian Seminyak, and Jonica Paramor who shared news from the COMO Hotels & Resorts brand (pictured).

Kotanidis took the opportunity to announce the idea for a ‘Best of the Best Ultimate Famil’, planned for Oct 2026.

The 11-night luxury famil will be limited to seven advisors and jointly hosted by multiple brands.

Knox thanked the guests for attending and making the evening another successful night in the event’s history.

“Thank you so much for coming this evening because I know that you’re bombarded with invitations and it’s really great to have you hear this evening - it’s a great turn-out, absolutely no no-shows tonight,” Knox said. *DF*

Mercure Indonesia

ACCOR has expanded in Indonesia with the signing of Mercure Cibadak Sukabumi Resort in West Java.

Now open, the property features 99 rooms, including treehouse-style accommodation, as well as four swimming pools, a kids club, bird aviary, fitness centre, and a ballroom. *JM*

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Local is the new luxury

FROM artisanal mozzarella making workshops to wine-tasting classes, Entire Travel Group is responding to travellers’ desire for immersive experiences with the launch of its new Locally Made collection.

Announced at its 2026 Travel Showcase & Soirees, the collection is focused on authentic experiences and itineraries allow guests to engage with local experts, who share their knowledge during a range of activities all around the world, including Italy, France, Canada and Tahiti.

“We work with an incredible range of suppliers, and these people are the best of the best when it comes to passion and skills,” Entire managing director Brad McDonnell said.

“It could be an intimate experience exploring a local wine cellar or learning the secrets of artisan cheese-making in France, joining a truffle hunter and his



dog in the forests of Italy, or learning about history and culture from a local indigenous woman in Canada,” he added.

The Locally Made collection also represents a shift in what travellers consider to be luxury.

“Luxury now is about enjoying experiences that very few people get to do and that create unique memories,” McDonnell said.

Entire attracted more than 1,000 travel agents at its Sydney, Melbourne, and Brisbane gatherings for its 2026 Travel Showcase & Soirees. *JHM*

Pictured: Entire’s Greg McCallum mingling with guests at the recent soirees.

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BCD opens the door

GLOBAL travel management company BCD Travel has undergone a major rebrand, led by the tagline, 'Open by Design'. The repositioning is designed to represent BCD's ability to build trust and collaborate with clients, stimulating business growth. BCD described the rebrand as a reflection of its role as a tech-driven travel management company, investing in innovation as the needs for global travel and workforce mobility increase. The website and its TripSource app have new clean, minimalist design to represent how BCD connects people and technology for optimal business travel. *JB*

Q'town sees RED

RADISSON Hotel Group has signed the Radisson RED Hotel Queenstown, set to open in early 2028, as the hotel group expands its footprint in New Zealand. Located a seven-minute walk from the heart of the city, the new property will feature 221 rooms, including four deluxe rooms and five suites, meeting and conference facilities. There will also be an all-day dining and a rooftop bar with a large terrace, opening onto expansive mountain views. Guests will also have the opportunity to enjoy views of Coronet Peak, the surrounding ranges and Lake Wakatipu. The Queenstown property will follow the opening of Radisson RED Hotel Auckland. *JHM*

Fairer airfares sought

REGIONAL Capitals Australia (RCA) and the Australian Airports Association (AAA) are working together to advocate for fairer airfares, stronger connectivity, and more sustainable airports across the country's rural areas. The two are co-piloting a recently signed memorandum of understanding, as they aim to confront this year's "once-in-a-decade" opportunity to put rural Australia front-and-centre in a national conversation about more equitable aviation. RCA and AAA will work on opportunities to identify and progress shared research, policy, and advocacy priorities. They will together highlight to government the need to

Hotel revenue soars

AUSTRALIA'S hotel industry saw a positive influx of investment and revenue throughout 2025, according to a new report by Colliers Capital. Close to 70 assets within the industry were traded last year, 13 of which for over \$50 million, generating \$2.7 billion. The result is an 80% increase on last year, and was 58% above the long-term average. NSW continues to lead the way in hotel dominance, holding a market share of 45% in 2025, however Qld made up the most ground, now ranking second with a 26% market share, as well as a YoY growth of 80%. *JB*



secure the ongoing viability of rural aviation routes, establish recurrent federal funding for both capital and operational security costs, and resolve "inequitable" security requirements that impose city-level costs on low-risk rural airports. "Regional airports are the lifeblood of regional communities - critical to health, education, tourism, trade and disaster response and resilience," RCA chair and Mayor of Dubbo Josh Black said. "The financial viability of regional airports is constantly under threat, with sustainability often propped up by local govt rates rather than state of federal funding sources." The collaboration follows the AAA calling on the Federal Govt to boost its spending on regional airport facilities (*TD* 03 Feb). *MS*

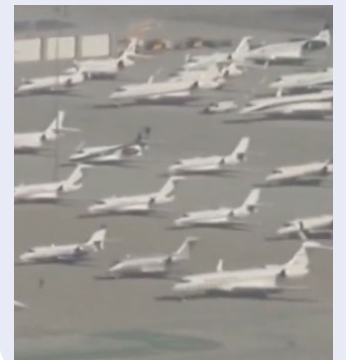
La Vie debut signing

LA VIE Hotels & Resorts has expanded its portfolio by taking on the management duties of the Hotel Casiana & Events Centre in Tagaytay, the Philippines - its first signing in the country. The 146-room property features a heated pool, kids' club, event spaces, and Crystal Ballroom. *JB*



Window Seat

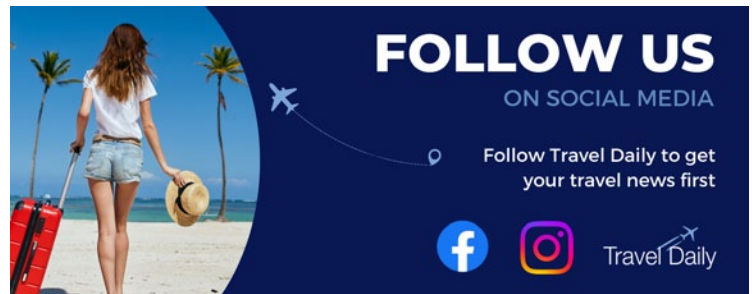
FOR the rich and famous keen to watch the Super Bowl but have left plans to the last minute, thank goodness airports have scheduled additional capacity for private jets (PJs) in the Bay Area. It is expected that on Sun, 300 PJs will descend upon San Jose International Airport (the closest airfield to Levi's Stadium) and 315 business jets will leave after the game, a dramatic increase on its 400-500 daily aircraft movements. Normally, close to 600 private jets visit the host city for the Super Bowl, but as SJC is unable to accommodate that number, planes will also fly to neighbouring hubs like San Francisco International. Given the limited capacity of Levi's (68,500), demand for tickets is high and cost thousands of dollars each, so plenty of the attendees are well and truly cashed up. *JHM*



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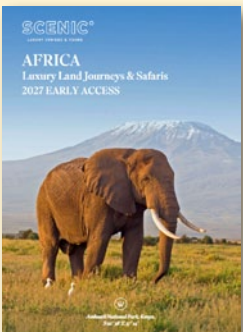


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Viva Holidays - Western Australia 2026/27
From five-star Perth hotels to secluded cabins overlooking rolling vineyards in the Margaret River region, Viva Holidays' new 60-page brochure showcases the best of Western Australia. Travel advisors and their clients will find a rich collection of experiences and a range of accommodation options, including new additions in Perth, Fremantle, the South West and Broome. For those looking for a small-group journey, Viva has a new three-day Margaret River escape and an eight-day Exmouth Ningaloo Reef adventure. Readers can also discover Viva Holidays' Kimberley expedition cruising. Access the brochure online [HERE](#).



Scenic - Africa Land Journeys 2027
Scenic Luxury Cruises & Tours has released its 2027 Africa luxury land journeys and safaris early access collection. Itineraries explore vast national parks and game reserves teeming with wildlife, from the plains of East Africa to Southern Africa's iconic safari regions, and feature stays in luxurious hotels and safari lodges. Within the brochure, readers can learn about the 14-day 'Kenyan Discovery', where guests will explore Amboseli National Park, famed for its large elephant herds set against the backdrop of Mount Kilimanjaro, and learn about wildlife conservation at Ol Pejeta. Find the brochure [HERE](#).



Hebridean Princess - 2027 Cruise Collection
Boutique UK cruise line Hebridean Island Cruises has unveiled its 2027 season in the Scottish Isles and northern Europe, detailed in a new brochure. The season will offer 37 journeys of between four and eight nights featuring the Scottish Highlands and the islands around Scotland such as the Hebrides, Orkneys, Shetlands and the Isle of Man, as well as Northern Ireland, Wales, the Channel Islands, Belgium, The Netherlands and northern France. Readers will also learn about a new history and culture-focused itinerary, along with an array of other themed cruises. Access the brochure [HERE](#).

Unforgettable hotels



UNFORGETTABLE Croatia's Australian team is touring Australia and NZ as part of the Hotel Connection Showcase. The tour kicked off last week in Melbourne, then headed to Sydney on Thu, with today's event being held in both the Gold Coast and Brisbane, finishing in Auckland on Wed.

Sydney's event was attended by over 100 agents at the Museum of Contemporary Art, in which Unforgettable Croatia was able to showcase its small-ship cruising experiences, as well as hotel offerings within the Hotel Connection group.

"The Hotel Connection Showcase is a great way to

highlight Unforgettable Croatia's luxury small-ship product to hundreds of travel agents across Australia and New Zealand and we look forward to making new connections, and catching up with existing partners, throughout the month", said Aurore Bertomeu, Unforgettable Croatia's Australian-based European Travel Specialist. *JB*

Pictured enjoying a well-earned drink are: Philip Robinson, Paolo Kasteleo, Aurore Bertomeu, Sarah Whitty, Cristina Mochales, Filippo Curinga, Miguel Consiglieri, and Samantha McGetrick.

BNE shows support

BRISBANE Airport is set to give away \$125,000 to select community clubs and grassroots organisations as part of its annual Community Giving Fund.

To be eligible for the fund, groups must specialise in projects that either preserve the natural environment, enrich diversity, assist in academic development, support social and physical wellbeing, or promote community sporting initiatives.

Applications are open until 28 Feb and can be made [HERE](#). *JB*

Comac a big player

AIRBUS CEO Guillaume Faury has admitted that Chinese aircraft maker Comac will become a serious player in aviation.

Speaking at the World Government Summit in Dubai, Faury added Comac had already received certification from Chinese regulators and local carriers have put in large orders.

While supply chain issues have made it tempting for carriers like Emirates to entertain Comac orders outside of Airbus and Boeing, Virgin Australia previously stated it would not be a client of the Chinese brand anytime soon (*TD* 06 Feb 2025). *JB*

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