

Today's issue of TD
Travel Daily today features seven pages of news, including a photo page from **Visit USA** and our **Business Events News**, plus a full page from **EVA Training Academy**.

Qantas bets on Las Vegas

QANTAS has announced a seasonal direct Boeing 787 flight from Sydney to Las Vegas, becoming the first airline to connect Australia to Sin City non-stop (**TD** breaking news).

The flight will operate as QF55, beginning on 29 Dec 2026 and operating until 12 Mar 2027.

It will run three times per week on Tues, Thu and Sun, departing Sydney at 9.00pm and arriving in Las Vegas at 3.55pm with a flight time of 13 hours and 55 minutes.

Las Vegas will become the 101st destination in the Qantas network and the airline's eighth city across North and South America, joining Los Angeles, San Francisco, Honolulu, Dallas, New York, Vancouver and Santiago.

Qantas International chief executive officer Cam Wallace said, "Australians' appetite for international travel continues to be incredibly strong."

"Rome and Sapporo have



shown us there's real demand for seasonal services to destinations people want to visit at certain times of year, and we're continuing to expand those direct connections around the world.

"Our historic fleet renewal is giving us the flexibility to deploy aircraft where we see demand, opening up route possibilities that simply weren't there before."

For the past two years, Qantas has operated charter flights in partnership with the NRL from Australia's east coast to Las Vegas to get fans to games.

Flights took off this week and, for the third year in a row, are fully booked. *DF*

FJ nabs Tyrrell

FORMER Globus family of brands MD in Asia Pacific, Gai Tyrrell, has joined Fiji Airways as regional director - Australia and New Zealand.

Tyrrell stepped away from Globus at the beginning of last year (**TD** 06 Jan 2025), and prior to that worked at Hawaiian Airlines as regional director - Australia and New Zealand and Sabre Pacific as VP and CEO Australia and New Zealand.

At the same time as announcing Tyrrell's appointment, Fiji Airways has also announced that John Nickel will transition into the role of general manager - Pacific Islands from 01 Apr.

Nickel, who has been with the carrier for two decades, was formerly regional GM Australia.

Fiji Airways has also welcomed Russell Shaw as chief - network, revenue and alliances.

Shaw brings more than 20 years' of commercial and finance experience, including eight years at VA as GM - network, revenue management and alliances.

"Building on our current strength, we are reinforcing leadership across our key markets and commercial functions," Scurrah said. *JM*

Train up on Taiwan

AGENTS can gain insight into Taiwan's travel offerings by joining EVA Air's training hub.

For example, learn about the East Asian country's free half-day tour, as well as the airline's latest product updates.

See the **back page** for details.



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Window Seat

NO ONE likes to receive a fine, but getting hit with one as soon as you start your holiday would really be a blow.

Italy has introduced tourist laws in which dragging a suitcase across city streets comes with a hefty fine.

In Rome, wheeling a suitcase down the Spanish Steps could see travellers slapped with a €400 (A\$663) fee, depending on the damage caused.

Other cities like Portofino have banned tourists for simply lingering in areas of high foot traffic while carrying a suitcase - an offence that attracts a €500 (A\$829) fine.

Upon arrival, tourists are advised to head straight to their hotel or use a luggage storage service. *JB*

US pushes tourism despite "concern"

THE United States is "rolling out the welcome mat" for Aussie travellers - that was the key message behind Brand USA's visit to Australia this week.

"We know that there is some tension, but the US is more than that," Brand USA's senior director of global trade development for APAC, Suzy Shepard, told *TD*.

"You travel for more than politics - you travel to have those people-to-people connections and cultural moments."

While there has been a rollercoaster of challenges and "a lot of talk" of roadblocks for Australian travellers going to the US, "nothing has materially changed in terms of the entry process", Brand USA's SVP, PR and chief communications officer Chris Heywood told *Travel Daily*.

The DMO is also currently working with Customs and Border Protection and the Department of Homeland Security to facilitate



travel to the United States, Heywood added.

"I acknowledge that there is a concern, but I'm here to reassure travel audiences that people should continue to come to the United States and not be deterred by some of what they're hearing in the news because some of that is sensationalised," Heywood said, advising travellers to take "a common sense approach" when entering the country by preparing paperwork ahead of time, including flight and accommodation details.

"We are involved in doing all

that we can to welcome Aussies to our shores and I'm here to tell you, we warmly invite you - we want your business," he said.

Earlier this week, the US Global Entry program was temporarily suspended, which offered some travellers streamlined clearance through dedicated lanes at migration (*TD* 24 Feb).

Brand USA is preparing for "an unprecedented year of opportunity for the US", with a calendar full of "once-in-a-generation" events, such as the Route 66 centennial, the 250th anniversary of independence and the FIFA World Cup.

"By working closely with trade and media across both markets, we're focused on converting that momentum into visitation and inspiring travellers to experience the full breadth of the United States," Heywood said. *JHM*

Pictured: The Brand USA team at last night's Visit USA expo.



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Anantara comes to Aus



MINOR Hotels is set to debut its Thai-inspired Anantara brand to Australia with the signing of Anantara Perth Hotel.

The property is set to open in 2032, within the \$3.8 billion Burswood Point development on the banks of the Swan River.

Located in a central area just outside of Perth's CBD, the property is only a short drive from the airport, with 150 keys, two restaurants, swimming pool and fitness centre.

The property will help establish the Burswood Point area as a key entertainment, tourism and residential precinct, alongside embracing contemporary architecture and sustainable practices in every room and suite.

Anantara Perth will be one of over 50 Anantara properties worldwide as well as joining

more than 60 Minor properties in Australia, including Oaks Hotels, Resorts & Suites and premium Avani Hotels & Resorts brands.

Dillip Rajakarier, group chief executive officer of Minor International said one of the key reasons for the signing was that "Perth is experiencing rapid development across its urban and tourism landscape, creating the ideal environment for a property of this standard".

The hotel "represents our commitment to expanding world-class luxury experiences into new markets", he added.

Another major reason for the signing was Perth's position as a gateway to WA's natural scenery such as beaches and parklands. *JB*

Linking Launceston

LINK Airways has revealed plans to launch flights between Launceston and Canberra beginning 06 May.

Using the regional carrier's SAAB340B plane, the year-round service will run four times a week.

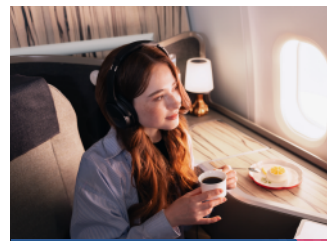
The announcement marks the first time Link Airways has flown out of the Tassie capital, with the new service backed by the state government's Aviation Attraction Fund partnership with Launceston and Canberra Airports. *JM*

VA still wants pets

VIRGIN Australia has reaffirmed its commitment to continue its Pets in Cabin services on eligible domestic flights after delaying further expansions last month (*TD* 15 Jan).

The carrier plans to introduce the initiative to select Adelaide and Launceston flights, subject to airport approvals, at a date to be announced after the Easter holiday period.

Since launching the pet service last year (*TD* 19 Sep 2025), which is now available on four routes, VA is set to welcome its 1,000th pet onboard this month. *JB*



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QF's billion-dollar day

QANTAS has released its H1 FY 2026 results (*TD* breaking news), heralding an underlying profit before tax of \$1.46 billion, a \$71 million increase compared to the corresponding period in 2025.

The result led Australia's national carrier to announce that "along with the investment we are making in our customers and people, we are also increasing returns to shareholders".

The board approved a fully franked interim base dividend of \$300 million (19.8 cents per share), a 20% increase on the base dividend on H1 FY25, which will be paid on 15 Apr 2026.

In addition, Qantas Group announced its intention to undertake an on-market share buyback of up to \$150 million.

On the domestic front, Qantas and Jetstar recorded "sustained growth" which helped Group Domestic deliver \$1.05 billion in underlying EBIT, up 14%.

Qantas suggested there was "strong demand" for international travel, but underlying EBIT for H1 FY26, excluding Jetstar Asia and Jetstar Japan, dropped 6% to



\$463 million.

It attributed the decline to cost escalation in Qantas International, including elevated engineering and industry costs, higher wages across some operational workgroups and the commencement of training for new aircraft.

Meanwhile, Qantas Loyalty recorded underlying EBIT of \$286 million, up 12% on the previous corresponding period, driven by what Qantas Group called "the strength of the Frequent Flyer program through member engagement and a growing list of partners, as well as continued revenue growth from Qantas Business Rewards, Hotels and Holidays, and TripADeal". *DF*

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CTM's unaudited numbers

CTM this morning released unaudited H1 FY26 results citing revenue and other income of \$348.5 million and underlying EBITDA of \$77.7million.

It also announced that cash at 31 Dec was \$121.2 million (down from \$124.0 million in Jun 2025), asserting it was reflective of the working capital impact of the revised IATA arrangements and a number of one-off costs.

Despite its auditing issues, CTM has suggested that it continues to win new business and registered client retention above 97%.

It reported that work on the UK forensic accounting review was approaching finalisation, and completion was anticipated in Mar 2026.

CTM asserted that it had

identified a clearer path forward which included finalisation of a remediation plan with key impacted UK customers and recognition of associated liabilities to enable FY25 audited financial statements to be issued.

The business suggested it had undertaken a review to confirm whether matters similar to those identified in the UK were present in other regions but that the review did not identify any issues of a similar nature.

Despite this, *Sky News* reported today that Flight Centre Travel Group's boss Graham Turner had noted an uptick in corporate contracts since the CTM issues came to light, telling *Sky*, "[There have] probably been some contracts come to us," and that, "[we] don't really know yet what the story is behind CTM". *DF*

The power of three

THREE well-known names in Australian travel PR - Liza-Jayne (LJ) Loch, Chris Waite and Gaynor Reid - have banded together to launch Powerhouse Communications, a travel comms, PR and corporate affairs agency.

The trio brings a combined 90 years of experience, having represented major brands across airlines, cruise, hotels, destinations, travel tech and industry bodies.

Powerhouse Communications will offer a full suite of services, including reputation strategy and diagnostics; corporate and government affairs; media strategy, relations and training; crisis preparedness; and more.

Loch, Waite and Reid (**pictured**) will continue to operate their own consultancies alongside the new endeavour. *JM*



AAT boosts sales team



AAT Kings has bolstered its sales power with three new appointments, with the aim of enhancing its trade partnerships in Australia and New Zealand.

Adrian Piotto has joined the team as general manager of commercial, sales and revenue, while Christina MacDonald has stepped into the role of NSW/ACT sales manager and Nicky Keay has taken on the title of sales manager for Queensland.

In his new role, Piotto (**pictured middle**) will draw on his extensive experience within the travel sector, including a five-year stint as G Adventures MD, Australia and New Zealand.

Meanwhile, MacDonald

(**pictured left**) has previously held leadership roles with Flight Centre, and Keay (**pictured right**) brings 25 years' experience across the retail, wholesale, airline and cruise sectors.

"We know that strong trade partnerships are at the heart of our success, and the appointments of Adrian, Christina and Nicky reflect our commitment to supporting our agency network," said AAT Kings CEO Ben Hall. *JM*

Air NZ at a loss

AIR New Zealand has reported a loss before tax of NZ\$59 million for the first half of the 2026 financial year, compared with earnings before tax of NZ\$144 million in the prior corresponding period (**TD** breaking news).

The net loss after taxation was NZ\$40 million.

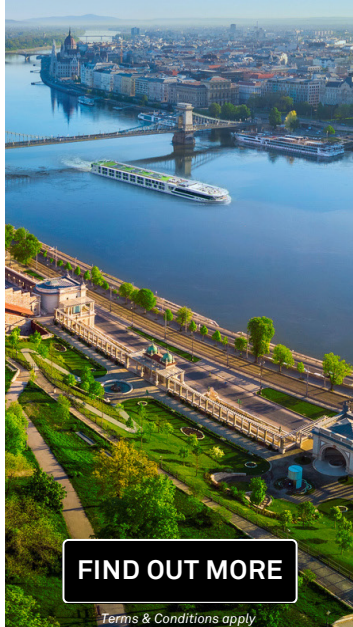
The carrier attributed the soft results to global engine maintenance delays, slower-than-expected recovery in domestic demand, increased aviation system costs, and slow recovery of domestic demand.

"We are undertaking a comprehensive review of all aspects of the business, with the objective of returning the airline to sustained profitability through enhanced operational performance, growth and further cost transformation initiatives," CEO Nikhil Ravishankar said. *DF*

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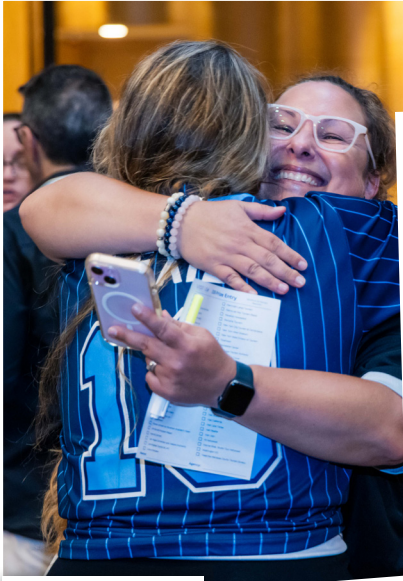
Hey, hey it's Visit USA in Sydney

SYDNEY brought the house down as the grand finale of the Visit USA Expo Series, wrapping up an action-packed three-day roadshow at The Fullerton Hotel Sydney last night.

More than 200 local agents filled the expo floor, connecting face-to-face with some of America's top tourism brands from iconic destinations and leading hotel groups to major airlines and experience providers.

The USA truly came to life with a tasting station featuring Aviation American Gin from Portland and live caricature portraits, while the brand-new social media competition sparked plenty of creativity (and friendly rivalry) from agents. What a spectacular send-off for an unforgettable series.

For updates, follow [@visitusa_au](https://www.instagram.com/visitusa_au) on Instagram.



EXPO energy.



VISIT USA President Caroline Davidson.



THE US was centre of attention all week.



SHOOTING hoops.



NETWORKING in action.



SIP, sip hooray!



BUILDING connections.



BRINGING the bling.



CELEBRATING in style.



STRIKING a pose.



Think represents Oz in Bangkok

THINK Business Events delivered the World Federation of Occupational Therapists (WFOT) Congress earlier this month, reinforcing Australia's MICE reputation in Thailand.

The conference brought together more than 2,300 delegates from around the world for a week of knowledge exchange, networking and professional development at the Bangkok International Trade and Exhibition Centre (BITEC).

Attendees enjoyed pre- and post-Congress tours, along with activities that offered cultural immersion.

Think Business Events is set to continue its strategic partnership with WFOT, with planning now underway for the next Congress in 2030.

EVENTS HEAD WEST

WESTERN Sydney doubled down on its aim to attract more business events to the region at the Western Sydney Business Events Forum last week, hosted by the Western Sydney Tourism Taskforce (WSTTF).

Hosted at the William Inglis Hotel, the event saw senior leaders from hotels, event venues, clubs, and local government come together to help shape the next phase of Western Sydney's visitor and events landscape.

The day featured keynote presentations and a panel discussion focusing on the importance of packaging events with local experiences and the advantages that the region can offer compared to the CBD, followed by a guided venue tour.

One of the speakers on the day, Business Events Sydney CEO Amanda Lampe, highlighted the importance of leveraging Western



Sydney's diversity to deliver engaging delegate experiences, and noted that BESydney is seeking to attract more events to the region.

"With the Western Sydney International Airport set to open in 2026, the region is entering one of the most significant periods of transformation in its history," explained Fazila Farhad, WSTTF chair.

"The forum aims to unify industry stakeholders, drive new collaboration pathways, and strengthen Western Sydney's positioning as a premier business-events destination." *JM*

Supplier prestige

BCD Meetings & Events (BCD M&E) recently celebrated its top performing suppliers at the 2025 Global Preferred Supplier Program Recognition Awards.

Voted for by BCD M&E's employees throughout 2025, the program saw Hyatt receive the Strategic Partnership Award for its dedication to building trust and ability to create a strategic plan that fosters long-term growth.

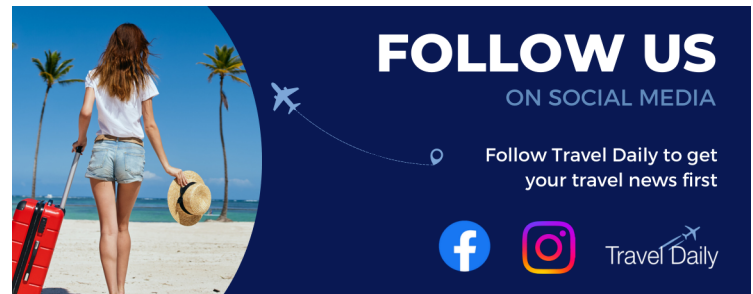
Acknowledging their dedication to understanding their local and regional markets, Hilton, Landry's Inc, CongressBookers and Malu Events were presented with the Service Excellence Award.

The awards ceremony took place at the InterContinental in Boston earlier this month at the same time as BCD M&E's Global Summit.

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APPOINTMENTS

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oneworld has appointed former **Ole Orver** as its new CEO, replacing the outgoing Nathaniel Pieper. He previously held leadership roles at oneworld member airlines Finnair and Qatar Airways, as well as roles with SAS Scandinavian Airlines and Lot Polish Airlines.

Chapman Freeborn has appointed **Gabrielius Morkunas** as its new chief financial officer. He has held several CFO positions all of which were in the Lithuanian capital Vilnius, however this is his first role within the travel and aviation industry.

Wild Bush Luxury has announced the appointment of **Frances Pollock** as Lodge Manager at South Australian conservation and safari retreat **Arkaba**. She has spent the past 17 years at Wooleen Station in WA's Murchison region, where she was managing director.

Mick Fogg, GM of Pearl Expeditions has been appointed chair of **Kimberly Marine Tourism Association**. His role will see him lead the body that oversees more than 30 licensed marine tourism operators across Australia's west coast, from large expedition cruise vessels to small boutique charters.

Sunshine Coast Airport chief executive officer **Chris Mills** has been appointed to the **Visit Sunshine Coast Board**. Mills has led the airport since 2023 and has had more than 35 years' experience in aviation, tourism, events and property development.

Charlotte Easton will start a new role as international sales coordinator at **Journey Beyond**. Before an almost five-year stint away from the travel industry, she was a senior travel consultant for Flight Centre, as well as a tour guide and sales assistant at Coral Bay Ecotours.

Ticketek Entertainment Group (TEG) has appointed **Greg Segal** as managing director of sponsorship & premium experiences. He was most recently the president of brand marketing at Live Nation Entertainment ANZ and has had more than 30 years' experience in brand partnerships, entertainment marketing and commercial strategy.

Cyrus Wong will be the new general manager, Oceania at **Plaza Premium Group (PPG)**. He first joined PPG in Mar 2020 supporting PPG's international expansion and later became director, asset management in Sep 2024.

Valpas has appointed four new executives as part of its global expansion. **Claus Unterkircher** is the new head of operations, previously holding several senior executive roles in tech and mobility across Europe. **Enzo Aita** is the head of ecosystem with 20 years' experience in the travel industry. **May Hertenon** is the new senior customer success manager and **Sofi Laakso** the new go-to-market manager.

NRMA on Sunrise



CHANNEL Seven's Sunrise is currently embarking on a week-long road trip up Australia's east coast in partnership with NRMA Parks & Resorts.

The trip began on Mon on the Central Coast and will finish tomorrow on the Southern Great Barrier Reef, with live weather crosses on location each day.

NRMA properties showcased include Ocean Beach Holiday Resort at Umina, where the trip began, Port Macquarie Breakwall Holiday Park, Angourie Resort in Yamba, Treasure Island Holiday Resort on the Gold Coast, and lastly, Turtle Sands Nature Resort at Mon Repos.

Embarking on the trip alongside the *Sunrise* crew are travel content creators Paul and Katie Guerin, known as The Feel Good Family, who will attempt to capture a genuine family holiday experience and endorse NRMA Parks and Resorts for families looking to book their next trip.

At the same time, NRMA Parks & Resorts has also launched a competition giving one lucky winner the chance to create their own dream holiday itinerary

across the NRMA network, valued up to \$10,000. *JB*

Pictured: The *Sunrise* weather team visits guests at the NRMA Ocean Beach Holiday Resort.

Haneda hospitality

VILLA Fontaine Premier Haneda Airport at Tokyo Haneda Airport, which is directly connected to Terminal 3, is launching its 'Wonderful Japan' experience, combining private transport, cultural activities and dining in a single itinerary.

Guests will stay in an Executive category room or higher, enjoying daily breakfast, dinner and bar access with a selection of dishes from Japanese cuisine, a treatment session at ELLE SPA and access to the hotel's natural hot springs, as well as cultural experiences such as a private indoor rickshaw ride and kimono styling with a professional stylist.

There is also a 20% earlybird discount available when booked before 31 Mar, using the code BL46 on the official website.

Bookings can be made for stays from 01 Apr. *JB*

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