



### C360 special edition

THIS special supplementary edition of **Cruise Weekly** features all the news and updates from last week's Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA) Australasia Cruise360 2023 Conference in Brisbane.

There are seven action-packed pages plus full pages from:

- Uniworld Boutique River Cruises Aperitivo events
- Windstar 2025/26 early booking offer

### Lots of C360 action

**CRUISE Weekly** captured all of the action at Cruise360 in Brisbane last week, including plenty of photos online at [facebook.com/cruiseweekly](https://facebook.com/cruiseweekly).

As well as our comprehensive reporting we were also active on social media with posts and an extended video which can be viewed on our website at [cruiseweekly.com.au/videos](https://cruiseweekly.com.au/videos).

## Time for cruise to be loud and proud

CLIA Australasia Chairman, Norwegian Cruise Line Vice President & Managing Director Ben Angell, believes the cruise sector should be more vocal about what it is doing in the areas of environmental, sustainability and governance, in contrast to the rise of "greenhushing" as companies downplay their impact.

Speaking at Thu's Cruise360 conference in Brisbane, Angell reinforced how intrinsically linked the sector's success is to the communities it visits, and encouraged the industry to take more pride in the good work it is undertaking.

"I do think cruise should be more proud and more vocal about what we are doing, and I think that's a learning for us as cruise lines," Angell suggested.

"I don't think we've done a good enough job of publishing all of the great work, but we are



starting to do a better job of that now," he said.

"We are one of the leaders in the tourism sector in terms of our environmental goals and achievements, and we've got to be proud of talking about those openly," the CLIA Chair added.

Angell said other industries beginning to mute discussions about their positive and negative environmental impacts should not mean cruise should do so.

"It's very easy to try and avoid conversations about the

environment because we are an easy target - that's not going to fix the problem," he stated.

"We have to be vocal and we have to be authentic.

"We've got to look for things that we can do, both at the high level which takes a lot of time, but also at the grassroots level."

Angell is pictured centre at C360 alongside Royal Caribbean International Vice President & MD Gavin Smith, and interim Carnival Corporation President Australia Peter Little. *MS*

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### CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR WINNER



It was great to see so many of our valued travel partners at CLIA Cruise360. Thank you to those who entered the CLIA Cruise360 Big Cruise Giveaway - we really enjoyed seeing all your entries!

Huge congratulations to **Patricia Gordon** from **Savenio Travel** who was our lucky winner. We hope you enjoy your Bali to Sydney cruise aboard *Seven Seas Explorer*!



## Cruise tips from advisor and supplier experts

**"WHEN** a cruise line BDM walks into your office, don't let them leave until they show you how to use their booking engine."

Those were some of the sage words of wisdom given to travel advisors attending last week's Cruise360 conference in Brisbane, with Travel Associates' Kathy Pavlidis joining a panel of other esteemed experts moderated by Crystal's Debra Fox including Deb Corbett of Ponant, Justine Sealey from Ramsgate Travel Service, and Regent Seven Seas Cruises' Lisa Pile (**pictured**) talking on how cruise specialists can stand out.

"You need to be a master of [the BDM's] cruise line, because that gives you an advantage...you need to be all over it," Pavlidis said.

Her comments were echoed by Sealey, whose agency recently celebrated 40 years in business.

"Look up the definition of Business Development Manager



- they are there to help you develop your business," she said.

Sealey also noted that despite the rise of social media, there's nothing new about influencers.

"Travel advisors are true influencers, and some of us have been doing it for 30 years".

Regent's Pile urged travel advisors to continue educating themselves on cruise product.

"Please invest in yourself, be

curious, ask questions and don't be afraid to reach out to your cruise partners, your suppliers or other travel advisors...the biggest investment you'll ever make besides your house is to invest in yourself," the Regent chief said.

Deb Corbett from Ponant said suppliers were eager to help with any sort of resources or ideas, adding that the pandemic had been a key catalyst to allowing

new ideas to flourish.

"We had to reimagine our sales and marketing activities...we couldn't just keep doing what we were doing, we had to say 'no idea is a bad idea' and all these new concepts have just seen us come out of COVID so strongly," Corbett said, citing just one example where the company helped put together a survey for an agent hoping to stimulate business from their existing database, leading to lots of new bookings for the cruise line.

Pavlidis ended her comments with a plea for cruise lines to return to issuing printed documentation - a call which led to a round of applause from the Cruise360 audience.

"To all the cruise lines that used to provide us with these beautiful documentation packs, I beg you, for our luxury clients please bring them back," she said. *BP*

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## Start now for a sustainable future

**THE** Australian cruise industry has been urged to start “walking the talk” when it comes to sustainability, no matter whether they are “the biggest cruise liners in the world” or the “smallest business”.

Those where the words of Elissa Keenan (**pictured**), CEO of Ecotourism Australia, who spoke on stage to CLIA Managing Director Joel Katz.

When asked by *Cruise Weekly* whether travellers were willing to pay more for sustainable travel she said that while the statistics weren’t absolute, “we are seeing now demand is changing”.

Keenan asserted that sustainability was no longer a nice-to-have but an industry standard, and that key to success would working on a local level.

“I think the real opportunity is you know your products, know your local operators, know what’s



in your region, and cruising has that wonderful opportunity to really bring visitors to regional Australia,” Keenan exclaimed.

“It’s not just capital city ports.

“There is so much product, so many small to medium enterprise businesses doing wonderful activities, that your travellers, maybe they’re not asking for them yet, but they absolutely

will start asking what are the sustainability credentials? Who are the good operators?”

While Keenan admitted that starting was hard and payback would be more of a long term game, she encouraged businesses to “have an open and genuine conversation with yourself, with your staff...look around and say what are we doing?”. *DF*

## Agents urged to try ChatGPT

**CHATGPT** has been heralded as “something you want to have a look at immediately” by Jeff Leckey, General Manager Cruise, House of Travel NZ.

On a panel of cruise agents moderated by Dan Russell, General Manager and Director, Clean Cruising, Leckey was asked about how busy agents could find opportunities to increase their productivity.

Leckey said he used ChatGPT to provide ideas for his blogs.

“I just put into ChatGPT ‘give me 10 ideas for multigen cruise blogs’, and it comes back in about 10 seconds... you can then ask it to rewrite, expand for Kiwis and so on.”

Leckey explained that while you might need to change a few things, the AI results came back “straight away” and were very much on point.

## THANK YOU FOR VISITING THE MSC CRUISES TEAM AT CLIA360!

A huge thank you to CLIA Australasia for a fabulous event. It was a pleasure to connect with everyone and share the features and advantages of choosing MSC Cruises.



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## Avalon's high water mark

**THE** first quarter of 2023 saw Avalon Waterways sales in Australia and New Zealand reach their highest level ever, according to the line's MD Pam Hoffee, who was one of the international presenters at last Thu's Cruise360 in Brisbane.

In an on-stage conversation with Australian cruise pioneer Phil Hoffmann, Hoffee (**pictured**) said "we did more cruise business out of Australia than we did in 2019...so our numbers are an indicator of the health of river cruising overall".

Hoffee highlighted key trends including the work of travel advisors who are "leading the way in introducing river cruising to your clients".

Travellers are increasingly looking for immersive experiences and engaging with communities, while Hoffee also



noted that "younger people are coming to river" along with an increasing propensity for group travel bookings.

Avalon's Active Discovery range is also proving popular with multi-generational groups, Hoffee noted, with plenty of daily activities, while onboard gatherings also come with the flexibility for some who want to have a quiet night to simply "go back to the cabin and it's just 20 feet away".

## Move with the customer



**AGENTS** are moving with the times and matching customer needs, according to a panel of experienced cruise agents led by Dan Russell, General Manager and Director, Clean Cruising.

Russell was joined on the C360 stage by Megan Catterall, Travel Manager, LUXE by itravel, Maxine Adams, Travel Consultant, MTA-Mobile Travel Agents, Neil Kirby, Joint Managing Director, Travel Masters/The Travel Studio, Deb Long, Manager, Weston Cruise and Travel, and Jeff Leckey, General Manager Cruise, House of Travel NZ.

Key to the discussion was how cruise agents discover opportunities to collaborate with cruise lines, identify target audiences, and customise and tailor client experiences.

Among a range of themes, the most prominent one was ensuring that the agent matches the client to the experience that they want to have, no matter how experienced the client is with cruising holidays.

"Put the wrong person on the wrong cruise, you'll lose them, but put them on the right cruise and you've got a client for life, there's no doubt about it," Kirby told delegates.

"You've got all the tools at your fingertips now with a variety of cruise lines that are out there to

match the perfect cruise line to the perfect client and then away they go...so it's a very exciting time to be in cruise."

Catterall explained that her path to success was led by investing in giving the clients the surety they needed to make a booking.

"What I've done is I've identified my clients like to touch the product or hear the product.

"I got together with Silversea recently and did a lunch, I invited 22 clients and it was a really great day," she said.

Catterall shared that she wrestled with whether she should charge her clients to participate.

In the end, she didn't, and 17 of the 22 clients that attended ended up making a booking.

Kirby added that with so many options and strong cruise offerings, there was never a better time to get consumers into cruising.

"I don't think we've ever had such a perfect opportunity to introduce new to cruising.

"The variety of cruise lines we have out there used to be very simple...now it's going very grey...they're overlapping, you know, in two different areas," he said.

"So there really isn't any reason why someone should not want to cruise...you know, you hear this said so often, that there is a perfect cruise for everyone." DF

## Cruise Critic back?

**TRIPADVISOR** offshoot CruiseCritic is once again turning its eyes to the local market, with UK-based Executive Editor Adam Coulter telling Cruise360 delegates of hopes to once again employ a local editor to fill the role formerly held by Louise Goldsbury, prior to the company laying off over 900 staff in the early stages of the pandemic (**CW** 08 May 2020).

## Save the date!

**THE** cruise sector is being urged to save the date for next year's Cruise360 Australasia, which is scheduled to take place on 30 Aug 2024 at Sydney's International Convention Centre.

The event is expected to be bigger and better than ever, surpassing the staggering turnout and response to last week's 2023 edition which took place in Brisbane.



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## Virgin Voyages: innovation is the key

**VIRGIN** Voyages is constantly trying to “push boundaries” on board its ships, with the company’s Chief Brand Officer, Nathan Rosenberg, saying “innovation is something that has to be embedded in the core of every organisation”.

Speaking with MC James O’Loghlin at Cruise360 in Brisbane last week, Rosenberg (**pictured**) said “we do that, not too scientifically, but just by thinking ultimately how useful is what you’re doing to people?”

He cited the example of how easy it is to get a bottle of Champagne aboard a Virgin Voyages vessel.

“We were sitting around as a team thinking how annoying it



can be to line up for alcohol, and sometimes getting a bottle of Champagne when you really feel like you’re in the moment.

“And so we use technology, you can just shake your phone to order Champagne and have it brought to you, because you should be able to celebrate whatever you want, whenever you want,” he said.

Rosenberg also highlighted the “paradox” around some people thinking travel advisors don’t have a point of relevance any more, which he said was “crazy”.

“The world is so much more complex now, having people who can help you navigate that complexity becomes incredibly important,” he said.

“So the question you have to ask yourself is, what’s the utility I bring, what’s the value I’m adding to this relationship,” he said.

The same thing applies to the whole Virgin Voyages experience, Rosenberg noted, saying the product targets both people who love cruising as well as those who are new to cruise or really don’t find it appealing.

“The general thing is people just want to be relaxed and have an incredibly good time,” he said.

Rosenberg stepped into the Cruise360 chair at the last moment, replacing fellow Aussie Nirmal Saverimuttu who it transpired was in the process of being promoted to become CEO of Virgin Voyages (**CW** 08 Sep). *BP*

## ANZ ramping up

**AUSTRALIA** and New Zealand are set for a vibrant cruise season this summer, Cruise Lines International Association Managing Director Joel Katz told Thu’s Cruise360 conference in Brisbane.

New ships, new cruise lines, and more than 1,800 port calls in destinations around Australia are highlights for the country’s first cruise season to voyage beyond pre-pandemic numbers (**CW** 04 Sep).

Katz said 70 ships will visit in 2023-24, versus 60 in 2019/20, with Brisbane a fitting location for the conference given its standing as an increasingly important gateway within the South Pacific.

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## Doha to see 100 cruise calls

**THE** rise of Qatar as a cruise destination was highlighted during last Thu’s Cruise360 conference in Brisbane, with Visit Qatar on show as the event’s headline sponsor.

The destination was showcased by Craig Upshall, who told C360 delegates that there will be just under 100 cruise calls in Doha for the upcoming season.

“We’re going to have our best ever season this coming winter which starts at the end of Oct,” he enthused, highlighting a number of cruise line partners

operating in the region.

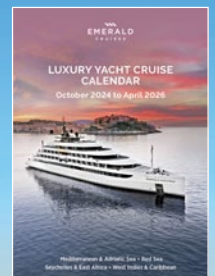
Upshall also took the opportunity to highlight Qatar Airways’ non-stop flights from Australia, skirting the delicate issue of the recent attempts to boost capacity.

“We’d like more flights...I can’t be more controversial than that,” he said.

Cruise360 also saw MSC Cruises showcasing its Doha offering with an incentive offering agents the opportunity to win a place on a Feb famil by booking a cruise in combination with a Qatar stopover.

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**GIVEN** what the cruise sector in Australia and New Zealand has been through since 2020 it's hard to believe the huge amount of optimism on display last week at CLIA's sellout Cruise360 conference in Brisbane.

Huge support from suppliers saw about 50 booths at the highly popular trade exhibition, while the sessions and presentations throughout the day provided meaty content to help cruise specialist travel advisors and wholesalers really boost their businesses.

**Cruise Weekly** took these photos on the day, with lots more at [facebook.com/cruiseweekly](https://facebook.com/cruiseweekly).

**Hands up if you think cruise is the future!**



**THE** huge Flight Centre Travel Group contingent at Cruise360 reflected the company's ongoing focus on cruising, including the recently announced relaunch of the dedicated Cruiseabout retail brand along with the CruiseHQ B2B wholesale packaging operation.



**CLIA** Chairman Ben Angell from Norwegian Cruise Line urged delegates to sign up at [nclswalkforwellness.com.au](https://nclswalkforwellness.com.au) for what's expected to be the biggest ever Walk for Wellness next month.



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**HELLOWORLD'S** Cruiseabout and Creative Cruising kept everyone sweet.



**TENILLE** Jenkins and Annika Leslie from Destination NSW.



**HERE'S** cheers from Carnival Australia's Kathryn Robertson and Katrina McAlpine from Cunard.



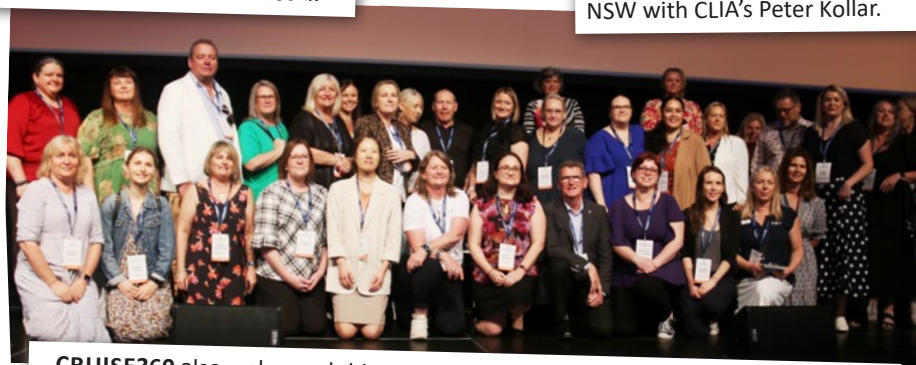
**VESNA** Pandza, Air Tahiti Nui with itravel chief Steve Labroski.



**MARYANNE** Metry from TAFE NSW with CLIA's Peter Kollar.



**THE** ladies of Uniworld: Jen Pagett, Alice Ager, Shelley Martin and Fran Gildon.



**CRUISE360** also welcomed this record group of New Zealand attendees.





**CAN** he kick it? Yes he can! Windstar Cruises BDM Rob Shaw was getting around in some fancy footwear at Thu's Cruise360 conference, showing off a pair of custom-made Converse sneakers.

Shaw had the shoes (pictured) specially printed on shore while on a Windstar cruise in Greece, and they were a popular attraction at the Windstar stall at the C360 trade show.

Also popular were the cruise line's gastronomic offering of cocktails - the perfect libation for delegates between all the Cruise360 sessions.



## Cruise must avoid "loving a place to death"

**ONE** of the key tenets of Seabourn Cruise Line's destination management plan is avoiding "loving a place to death", President & General Manager Expeditions Robin West said at last week's Cruise360 in Brisbane.

Speaking on the 'Destinations = Opportunities' panel, West said the cruise industry needs to avoid spoiling a popular destination through overtourism, with the Kimberley a key region of focus.

West called for greater cooperation between the sector to avoid this outcome, similar to the myriad Arctic and Antarctic destination management organisations.

"I think the way forward is potentially better collaboration between companies in terms of berthing times arrivals, because many times, it's just a bit of better planning," he said.

"I think sometimes you arrive at a port, you've got seven ships, and the next day and there's one, so I think the key to a lot of this is better collaboration between the various companies."

West said the result would be a more manageable outcome for



each destination, and a better experience for cruise passengers.

Various strategies are set to be trialled in the Kimberley over the coming cruise seasons.

"We're actually now facilitating that kind of a system in the Kimberley, because there's more vessels moving in the Kimberley, it's a new, emerging destination.

"It's fantastic to see how lessons learned in other parts of the world that have been successful, and are now being moved and implemented into new destinations like the Kimberley.

"It all comes down to the destination, the guest experience and what is sustainable for that area for the long-term."

Visit Qatar Global Head of Cruise Development Craig Upshall believes the responsibility for this should also be shared by the destinations.

Qatar's new cruise terminal only has two berths, with Upshall noting the destination pushes back on scheduling to megaships alongside each other.

Planning just one megaship per day also has the effect of stretching Qatar's cruise season, and spreading it across the year, he added.

**Pictured** are Upshall, Azamara Chief Sales Officer International Patrice Willoughby, West, & Celestyal Cruises Chief Commercial Officer Lee Haslett. *MS*



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### EDITORIAL

**Publisher** – Bruce Piper  
**Editorial Director** – Damian Francis  
**Associate Publisher** – Anna Piper  
**Contributors** – Myles Stedman, Adam Bishop, Janie Medbury, Matthew Wai

[info@cruiseweekly.com.au](mailto:info@cruiseweekly.com.au)  
[info@cruiseweekly.co.nz](mailto:info@cruiseweekly.co.nz)

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### ADVERTISING AND MARKETING

Sean Harrigan & Nicki Harford  
[advertising@cruiseweekly.com.au](mailto:advertising@cruiseweekly.com.au)  
[advertising@cruiseweekly.co.nz](mailto:advertising@cruiseweekly.co.nz)

### BUSINESS MANAGER

Davy Adams  
[davy.adams@cruiseweekly.com.au](mailto:davy.adams@cruiseweekly.com.au)

Suite 1, Level 2, 64 Talavera Rd  
Macquarie Park NSW 2113 Australia  
PO Box 1010 Epping NSW 1710 Australia  
Tel: (AU) +61 2 8007 6760 or (NZ) 0800 799 220  
Tel: (Int'l) 1300 799 220

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