

AFTA responds

AUSTRALIAN Federation of Travel Agents CEO Darren Rudd has revealed he hopes recent predictions made by Department of Health Secretary Brendan Murphy about the viability of int'l travel in 2021 (**TD** yesterday) are "ultraconservative" in nature.

Rudd said the comments only served to highlight the critical need for ongoing govt support for the travel and tourism sector during the prolonged shutdown, and that the resumption of overseas travel would be largely dependent on the rollout and uptake of COVID vaccinations in Australia and overseas.

Rudd added he would be heading to Canberra in the first week of Parliament to campaign for a renewed JobKeeper program commencing 01 Apr.

RCG sells Azamara

AZAMARA has been sold by Royal Caribbean Group (RCG) to private equity company Sycamore Partners for US\$201 million.

The all-cash, carve-out transaction is expected to close later in the first quarter, and will see Sycamore acquire the entire brand, including Azamara's three-ship fleet and associated intellectual property, with Royal Caribbean Group noting the sale is not expected to have a material impact on its future financials.

Royal Caribbean said it would work to transition employees, clients, and other stakeholders.

More in today's **Cruise Weekly**.

CHOICE targets travel

CONSUMER group CHOICE has launched a new campaign, seeking input from consumers impacted by travel cancellations due to COVID-19.

A CHOICE spokesperson told **TD** the initiative has the "aim of collecting data that will help us to work out what reforms are needed in the travel industry".

The poll, currently circulating on social media, invites travellers to detail the impact that the pandemic had on their travel plans, including experiences in receiving refunds, fees charged and how much money they have lost from cancelled or delayed travel plans.

The survey also asks how long consumers had to wait to get a

refund, voucher or resolution, and asks whether they would be happy to share their story with the media to help show some of the challenges consumers faced.

Another key question highlights Europe's stronger refund rights than those for Australian consumers, asking "should Australia's laws be changed to make it easier to access refunds or compensation in the event of future events like COVID-19?".

See action.choice.com.au.

Kirby leaves LHW

THE Leading Hotels of the World (LHW) has confirmed that Kevin Kirby is now no longer the organisation's Director of Sales, leaving after 27 years.

LHW MD Asia-Pacific Craig Adamson said the international travel outlook had forced "difficult and upsetting decisions to protect our business for the long-term," hailing Kirby for his contribution as "one of the hotel industry's most revered sales people and all round wonderful person".

Adamson also confirmed the departure of 10-year LHW veteran Elise Shaw from the group's reservation team.

Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today has six pages of news including our PUZZLE page plus a full page from **Northern France Tourism**.

Regent incentive

REGENT Seven Seas Cruises has today launched an incentive offering "24 hours of luxury" for the line's top trade partners.

The five top Australian sellers between 01 Jan and 20 Mar 2021 of any Regent cruise departing from 01 Oct this year will win a stay at Spicers Sangoma Retreat in the NSW Blue Mountains.

"Our valued trade partners are fundamental to the success of Regent Seven Seas Cruises and we cannot thank them enough for the continued support they have shown us in 2020 and beyond," said Lisa Pile, VP of Regent Seven Seas Cruises Australia/NZ.

More info on 1300 455 200.

Huge response to TD opinion piece

THE front page article about the comments by health bureaucrat Brendan Murphy (**TD** yesterday) prompted lots of feedback from across the industry, so we have published a special page of letters to the editor on **page four**.

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UAE COVID passes

EMIRATES and Etihad are set to trial a new COVID travel pass in partnership with the International Air Transport Association.

Passengers who have been inoculated against coronavirus, or who have tested negative, will be offered the pass on selected Emirates flights from Dubai and Etihad flights from Abu Dhabi.

Club Med updates

CLUB Med has introduced a new digital brochure detailing the operator's new resorts.

New locations include Club Med La Rosiere, Club Med Quebec Charlevoix and Club Med Seychelles, all of which can be viewed in the 2021 digital brochure, found [HERE](#).

Club Med also extended its 2020 Great Member loyalty statuses into 2021, and has added a range of additional booking bonuses - [CLICK HERE](#) for further information on deals available.

Say ooh la la to France

AUSTRALIAN travel agents now have the chance to learn more about the allure of northern France as a future holiday destination thanks to a new training partnership between The Northern France Tourism Board and the Sir John Monash Centre.

Launching via the *Travel Daily* Training Academy, there are eight specialist training modules for advisors to complete and turn themselves into an expert on the Hauts-de-France region, including learning about the hidden treasures of destinations like Lille, Amiens and Chantilly - the equestrian capital of France.

Modules will also immerse agents in the important Australian history of the region, travelling along the Australian Remembrance Trail on the Western Front, learning about sites such as the Australian National Memorial and the Sir John Monash Centre in Villers-

Brettonneux.

Speaking about the value of the new training options, Hauts de France Tourism Business Development Manager - Australia Dana Levy said agents would be delighted by the beauty and various Australian cultural connections in the region.

"Jump on to the modules for an in-depth discovery of the delights of northern France - a truly stunning region replete with indelible ties to Australia and a rich cultural history," she said.

Agents who decide to brush up and complete all eight lessons will score themselves a chance to win the ultimate Western Front Explorer Tour with Mat MacLachlan Battlefield Tours, as well as a wine pack from De Beaupaire Wines and a Sir John Monash Centre book.

See the [back page](#) for details and register FREE at www.northernfrancetraining.com.



Window Seat

REDDIT has come under fire many times in the past, but the social news aggregator put its more than 430 million users to good use recently, when they helped track down the owner of a 20-year-old travel diary (pictured).

User DoubleRiver shared photographs of a diary he found in his rental in Yarraville, Victoria, and before he knew it, Redditors were on the case, with the amateur sleuths tracing the diary back into the hands of its owner, who lived in Germany, and has since had his precious travel reflections posted back to him.



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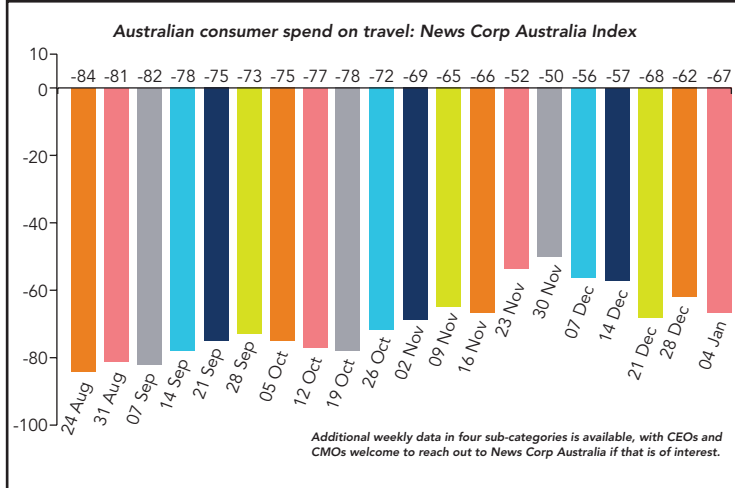
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Lockdown delivers blow



EXCLUSIVE

THE snap three-day lockdown of Greater Brisbane just after New Year delivered another major blow to consumer confidence in domestic travel, according to the latest News Corp Australia spending figures (pictured).

The results showed the largest week-on-week drop in spending since the start of the pandemic, as all states put restrictions on people who had visited the region over the Christmas break - impacting not only those who were about to travel but also people who had already arrived back in their own states.

"This has delivered considerable nervousness amongst Australians, in seeing the lasting impact that an interstate trip can have," according to News Corp Head of Travel, Dwayne Birtles.

He said doubt had been planted

in the minds of consumers around their next trip, making them consider swapping travel for a "staycation".

The biggest weekly spending declines were in the travel agents, touring and package holiday category, down 7% and now sitting at -77% year-on-year.

Air spend over \$350 dropped 10% and is now at -80%, while air spend under \$350 dropped 7%.

Birtles forecast another punch to consumer confidence in the coming weeks, after Mon's comments by Health Department chief Brendan Murphy that he doesn't forecast international travel opening in 2021 (TD 18 Jan).

"A portion of Australians may now end up booking a longer domestic trip, or remain hopeful about a resumption of some international travel in 2021...it's a weekly conundrum," he said.

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NCLH cancels again

NORWEGIAN Cruise Line Holdings (NCLH) has cancelled all Apr cruises as the company continues to work through its return to service plan.

The suspension includes all voyages on Norwegian Cruise Line, Oceania Cruises and Regent Seven Seas Cruises embarking through to 30 Apr, as NCLH attempts to meet the Framework for Conditional Sailing Order issued by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Guests are asked to contact their travel advisor or cruise line.

Hotel Indigo Syd to open in 2025

HOTEL Indigo Sydney Centre is set to open in the City Tattersalls Club building, upon the completion of its redevelopment in 2025.

Sitting atop City Tattersalls' 49-storey mixed-use premises, the tower will also include restaurants, event spaces, an exclusive business lounge, and health & wellbeing facilities.

Hotel Indigo Sydney Centre is expected to house 110 rooms and 246 residential apartments, and will front onto Pitt Street, nearby to the Pitt Street Mall.

InterContinental Hotel Group's Hotel Indigo chain is growing rapidly in Australia, with the first location to open in Adelaide on 01 Mar (TD 10 Sep 2018).

Claim Velocity points

VIRGIN Australia is currently giving Velocity Frequent Flyer members the opportunity to claim a share of 20 million reward points when they download the Velocity app by midnight (AEDT) on 26 Jan.

To claim the bonus points, users need to activate the offer available on the app's home screen, with points to be deposited by 28 Feb.

The promo follows Nick Rohrlach being made the CEO of VA's loyalty program (TD 18 Jan).

Airline decides to test the waters

SINGAPORE Airlines may be the first fully vaccinated international airline, with the carrier this week starting mass vaccinations of thousands of aviation and maritime workers.

The statement was made by Minister for Transport Ong Ye Kung, as the country sets up two large vaccine centres at Terminal 4 of Singapore Changi Airport and at Raffles City Convention Centre.

MEANWHILE, all international arrivals to Singapore will need to undertake mandatory coronavirus tests upon arrival in the country, starting 24 Jan.

The PCR tests will be required for all Singaporeans, as well as permanent residents and visitors.



Learn more

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Letters to the editor...

THE front page opinion piece on the comments of Professor Brendan Murphy (**TD** yesterday) prompted lots of feedback from our readers, so we have decided to publish some of the responses - with more to follow tomorrow. Thanks to everyone who took the time to weigh in.

Got something to share? Let us know via email to feedback@traveldaily.com.au. (contributions are edited for length).

It's time for mature voices

OPINION

Rodger Powell is the MD of Tourism and Hospitality Services Australasia.



IT IS time now for governments to start hearing from mature voices in our industry.

Governments must be held to account to deliver on all their responsibilities, and stop prefacing every public statement with "following the health advice" as if this is a get out of jail card.

The facts are that, outside of aged care, we have had 200 deaths from COVID in Australia in a year (there were 900 deaths from flu in 2019 and those numbers don't include people over 60 or under five).

The rhetoric is about cases, and it needs to be about deaths.

There have been no deaths this year, and today there are only 34 people in hospital with COVID - and only two in the ICU.

The government bought 5,500 new ventilators which remain unused, because we have effective health systems in both Australia and NZ and getting the cases identified early has resulted in an exceptional recovery rate.

However, the great health outcome has been achieved at a price that I would argue is too high. It is estimated that there are 200,000 less jobs in tourism than a year ago - the states have gone too far and too hard and Australia as a whole has suffered.

Unfortunately, our unwieldy plethora of underfunded industry associations has had little impact on government policy response for our sector.

Our normally vocal leaders are constrained in many cases due to being part of large, and often listed, overseas companies headquartered in countries

where the virus is rampant and the death rate disgraceful, and as such cannot make statements inconsistent with the corporate position - despite matters being very different in Oceania.

I strongly believe it is time for the owners of businesses to be heard by governments.

Right now support for our sector is decreasing at the same time as actions which cause immense damage are executed with no forewarning and no time to react.

A prioritised list of requests:

- A national Federal response to COVID-19 including the immediate cessation of border closures.
- An immediate travel bubble with NZ and the majority of the

Pacific Islands.

- A new system to encourage the urgent return (suitably quarantined at either end) of students and then working holiday makers.
- A national policy regarding refunds

to travellers whose plans are affected by COVID - it is not reasonable that organisations like airlines be allowed to withhold refunds for months thus destroying consumer confidence.

- Continued/renewed support for businesses to keep employees on the books and prevent more irrecoverable leakage of talent.

With these measures in place, continue promotional funding to stimulate increased domestic and international travel.

If governments don't hear from us then who will they hear from? It has become apparent to me that the majority of people, outside of tourism, retail and agriculture are largely unaffected by COVID and in fact many businesses have prospered. We need a change in approach.

“ I strongly believe it is time for the owners of businesses to be heard by governments ”

Virgin on ridiculous

OPINION

Jayne Hrdlicka is the CEO of Virgin Australia Group.

ALTHOUGH the health of Australians must be our first priority, today we feel like a collection of foreign countries.

The implementation of inconsistent rules and restrictions for travellers is having a significant impact on the economy, our people, their livelihoods, and the tens of thousands who've been disrupted over the summer.

The expectation that rules must be understood instantaneously by travellers and that businesses like ours must manage our operation around them is also proving extremely challenging.

We, and the business community have consistently asked for a coordinated national framework, alignment on state & territory decision making and a common-sense border approach.

Jun resumption makes more sense

OPINION

Chad Carey is co-founder of Chimu Adventures.

I FOUND it extremely disappointing to hear Brendan Murphy's prediction - but in the same conversation he mentioned that we're in uncharted territory, only looking a few months ahead. Why then would you make a forecast for a year's time?

To my thinking, Qantas' prediction of international travel commencing around June makes considerably more sense.

The Federal Government has already estimated that we will have four million Australians vaccinated by the end of Mar - roughly the number who may be vulnerable to death or serious injury from COVID-19.

There has been a lot of commentary around needing approximately 70% of the population vaccinated to achieve herd immunity and only then reopening international borders.

To me this seems to be a

Crystal ball broken

OPINION

David Beirman is a tourism and travel lecturer at UTS Sydney.

IF THERE has been one thing we should have learned from nearly a year of COVID-19 is that making predictions on future travel is fraught with uncertainty.

Having been interviewed by media almost 200 times over the past year with the majority of questions focused on when we can travel again, my crystal ball has shattered into a million pieces.

There was great expectation that the vaccine would solve all our problems but 30 deaths of elderly vaccine recipients in Norway and comments that vaccines don't actually protect people from infection have placed the cat among the pigeons.

I think all of us should err on the side of positivity but in life there are very few quick fixes. In the meantime we should all get very good at selling domestic travel.

methodology destined to either send the travel industry into a death spiral or cost a huge amount of taxpayer dollars to help prop the industry up.

Personally, I'd rather not take the government handouts. What we need is a timeframe around borders reopening so that we can all get back to booking clients.

The UK Government has stated that its top priority vaccination groups make up 99% of COVID-related deaths in the UK, adding that once these priority groups are vaccinated, by late Mar or early Apr, they expect things to return towards something resembling normality.

We can't live in a bubble forever - presuming we do have Australia's high risk categories vaccinated by the end of Mar, restarting international travel by 01 Jul appears to be a more than conservative target date. This would especially be the case if combined with some sort of vaccine passport system.

Pub quiz

- Which island hosts the site of the first European settlement in the Americas?
- The Sekotong Peninsula is found on which island?
 - Lombok, Indonesia
 - Ko Samui, Thailand
 - Phu Quoc, Vietnam
- What is the most populous city in Brazil?
 - Brasilia
 - Sao Paolo
 - Rio de Janeiro
- Dane Jorn Utzon designed what famous Australian landmark?
- Which is larger: Kakadu National Park or Tasmania?
- In which country would you find the Alligator Rivers?
- Bayview is an affluent suburb in which Australian city?
- Walsh Bay in Sydney Harbour stretches between which two peninsulas or 'Points'?
- Did the Melbourne Cup get shorter or longer when Australia adopted the metric system?
- The Corinth Canal connects which two bodies of water?

Sudoku

BEGINNER

THE aim of Sudoku is to complete the entire grid using the numbers 1-9. Numbers can only be used once in each row, column, and 3x3 box.

	2	1	6		9	4		
3	5			1	4			6
7				3				
	1		3	7			4	2
4								7
2	6			4	1		5	
				6				1
1			8	9			2	4
		4	1		3	8	9	

Seen it at the movies



VENICE in Los Angeles is a vibrant resort town boasting a bustling mix of shopping, surfing and artistic expression.

But its streets were not showing off their best and brightest side in this film starring Jake Gyllenhaal shot in 2014, a bleak and twisted tale exploring the dark side of

crime journalism.

Rene Russo also stars in this story about the ambulance chasing "if it bleeds it leads" approach to news reporting and does well to make such a fun and exuberant destination like Venice look so very, very seedy.

Can you name the movie?

Funnies Flashback



WE'VE trawled through the **TD** Window Seat archives to give you a blast from the past. Here's some gems from 24 Jun 2014:

MANAGEMENT at China Southern Airlines are clearly die-hard fans of the World Cup.

The carrier has implemented a blanket ban on all frontline staff from staying up late to watch, or even discussing results or talking points for the duration of the tournament.

In a notice to employees, the carrier cites safety as a reason for the ban, to ensure pilots are not flying while sleep-deprived. "Watching the World Cup will affect work and safety," the internal statement to staff read.

Any staff violating the rules will be punished, as will their direct supervisor.

Fellow Chinese carrier Spring Airlines has instituted a similar policy, saying: "In order to ensure safety, the carrier will check to see if employees are fatigued at any time," by taking blood pressure readings.

ANSWERS 19 JAN

Celebrity faces: Eyes - Darren Rudd, Nose - Cameron Diaz, Mouth - Denzel Washington

Unscramble: addle, adult, anted, auld, dale, dandle, date, dated, daunt, daunted, dead, deal, dealt, dean, delta, dent, dental, dual, dude, duel, duet, dune, eland, lade, laded, laden, land, landed, laud, lauded, lead, lend, nude, tend, tuned, undated, undead, undue, undulate, **UNDULATED**



EMIRATES has joined Singapore Airlines in rolling out a vaccination program for its workforce, with the carrier kicking off a drive to immunise staff based in the UAE (pictured).

The airline has started with priority frontline employees first, such as cabin crew, flight deck staff and other "operationally focused" positions, with the airline viewing the move as a major step forward to help protect the health and wellbeing of its staff who are serving travellers around the world.

Emirates has made both the Pfizer-BioNTech and Sinopharm vaccines accessible to staff at

various company locations across the UAE.

Pictured: A staff member gets the vital COVID vaccine.

Marriott APAC 2021

MARRIOTT International is continuing its Asia-Pacific growth plan, with nearly 100 properties expected to open this year.

Last year saw Marriott celebrate its 800th hotel opening in the Asia-Pacific, with 75 added to its portfolio during the year, representing more than one opening per week.

Nearly 27,000 rooms were added to the Asia-Pacific development pipeline last year, with highlights for 2021 to include W Hotels' debut in Japan via the opening of W Osaka, and Shanghai becoming the first APAC city to reach 50 Marriott properties, with the opening of JW Marriott Shanghai Fengxian.

AA Verify passport

AMERICAN Airlines has launched the Verify health passport application for travel to the United States.

Starting 23 Jan, Verify streamlines verification of coronavirus tests and other health documentation, and will be available to travellers on all international routes.

AA passengers will use the new health passport by entering their destination and uploading health documentation, importantly, a negative coronavirus test result.

The debut follows a trial on select routes, with the United States to require all travellers two and older to present a negative coronavirus test beginning 26 Jan.

ACCOMMODATION

WELCOME to Accommodation Updates, *Travel Daily's* Wed feature. If your property has undergone some recent changes you would like to make the industry aware of, send a brief description with an image to accomupdates@traveldaily.com.au.



Following its grand opening in Oct, the **Banyan Tree Krabi** has unveiled a new spa, which boasts a unique hydrotherapy facility and eight treatment rooms. The spa's therapists will offer "colour-calm" advice to suit a guest's individual temperament, with each treatment room fitted with a selection of accompanying lights.



A multi-million-dollar facelift has just been unveiled at **Parmelia Hilton Perth**, located nearby to Elizabeth Quay. Redesigned to bring hotel stays "into the digital age", the highlights of the \$45 million transformation include touchless technology and a new thoroughfare to the Brookfield Place precinct.



Cheval Lexham Gardens, which is coming to London's affluent Kensington district this year, will offer 30 fully equipped one- and two-bedroom apartments with contemporary decor spread across six storeys. One-bedroom apartments will start

at £260 per night.

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Travel Daily



Get to know *Northern France*

The Northern France Tourism Board with the support of the **Sir John Monash Centre** have created the ultimate online learning platform.

Discover the hidden treasures of Northern France along with all there is to offer along **the Australian Remembrance Trail** and become a trained expert for all your clients.

Complete a module for a chance to win a superb wine pack from de Beaufort wines and a Sir John Monash Centre book.

Complete all 8 modules to go in the draw to win **the ultimate Western Front Explorer Tour** with Mat MacLachlan Battlefield Tours.

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