

Auckland ready to tap into Sydney's port shortfall

NEW Zealand's primary cruise hub stands ready to prosper from Sydney's cruise infrastructure dilemma which has already seen the likes of Royal Caribbean scale back future cruise operations to the NSW capital city (**CW** 27 Apr) and Carnival Australia admit it is "increasingly basing ships in other cities such as Melbourne and Brisbane" (**CW** 04 May).

Yesterday at NZ's travel & tourism show TRENZ, Tourism Industry Aotearoa (TIA) chief exec Chris Roberts (**pictured**) unveiled the firm's *Tourism for Tomorrow* strategy for 2025 for the yet to be elected incoming NZ government.

The paper includes 29 "priority actions", one of which is a need to "invest more of the tourism dividend received by the govt back into infrastructure to support tourism's future growth".

Roberts specified a number of areas where progress was needed



Credit: Wayne Williams

including a need for "better cruise facilities".

Speaking exclusively with **Cruise Weekly** at TRENZ, Roberts said a solution to enable "Ovation of the Seas-sized" ships to dock at Queens Wharf was not far away & would encourage more cruise lines to base vessels in Auckland.

Due to it's size, *Ovation of the Seas* currently must drop anchor in Auckland harbour, meaning its 4,000 passengers must take a

tender to the land.

"We are lucky Royal Caribbean are doing that at the moment but it's not a sustainable solution."

He welcomed a recent solution for Lyttleton, Christchurch's cruise hub, that would enable *Oasis*-class ships to dock at the nearby port town (**CW** 02 May).

"If this suggested solution to make the wharf here in Auckland usable by all sized cruise ships, that will largely remove most of

the concern about cruise ship facilities," Roberts commented.

"Then Auckland can concentrate on stealing more business off Sydney," he told **Cruise Weekly**.

Roberts said with the proper cruise infrastructure in place (see **page two**) by as early as Sep this year, Auckland would be able to pitch to more cruise lines to base their ships in New Zealand, rather than having Auckland as a port of call on an itinerary out of Sydney.

"Pretty much the bulk of all our [ship] visits are coming out of Sydney, so we are missing out".

"We should be ambitious to have them based here rather than just a destination out of Australia," Roberts suggested.

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RCI Cuba year-round

ROYAL Caribbean International has opened its first year-long program to Cuba, introducing 58 new cruises on *Empress of the Seas* through to Mar 2019.

The vessel will operate four- and five-night itineraries from Tampa during the northern summer, calling on Key West, Costa Maya and Cozumel, as well as Havana, on most sailings.

During the northern winter 2018/19 season, *Empress of the Seas* will sail from Port Everglades and continue to operate short Caribbean itineraries.

RCI arrived into Cuba last month and Michael Bayley, president and ceo, RCI said the sailings have received a "positive reaction".

Auckland mulls solution

AUCKLAND Council is mulling a number of permanent mooring options at Queens Wharf in order to better handle mega cruise ships such as *Ovation of the Seas*.

The council is assessing an "inner dolphin" standalone fixed structure at the wharf's northern end which would enable Auckland to let cruise ship pax disembark on land, rather than via tender (see **page one**).

It insists there needs to be an "immediate berthing solution to avoid this season's scenario where *Ovation of the Seas* had to moor in the harbour".

As part of Council's Progressive Cruise Strategy, it stated "a lack

of fit for purpose infrastructure has the potential to halt industry growth and reduce the potential economic benefits to Auckland & to the rest of NZ which depends on Auckland as the hub port".

Although Tourism Industry Aotearoa chief executive Chris Roberts is hopeful the NZ\$10 million solution could be up and running before the end of this year, the council said in Mar "it is possible for it to be operational for the 2018/19 cruise season, subject to consent approval".

"Timing is critical to be ready for the 2018/19 cruise season and provide certainty for future cruise seasons. With consent, procurement & construction taking up to 15 months, a decision is needed soon. Berthing larger ships on Queens Wharf is the only available solution."

Auckland Council said funds for the inner dolphin would likely come from capital funds, adding they would be recovered through cruise ship passenger levies.

Queens Wharf, which is the site of Shed 10 (used as a cruise terminal), is located alongside Auckland's other major cruise facility Princes Wharf.

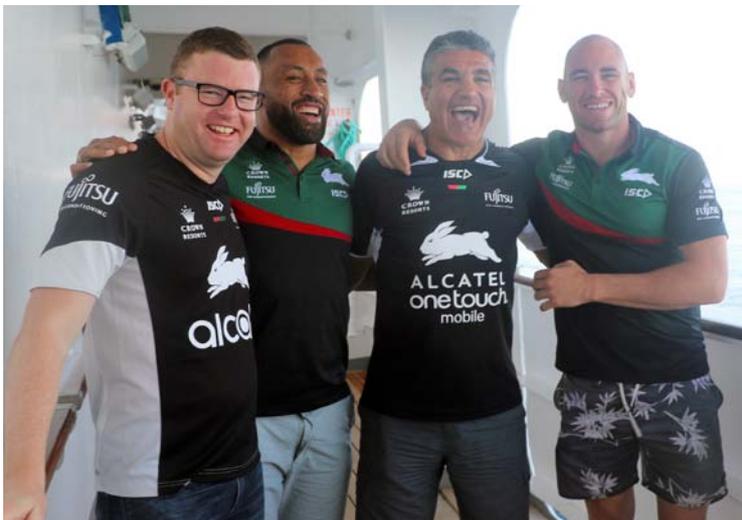
AmaKristina named

AMAWATERWAYS' newest vessel, *AmaKristina* has been christened in Lahnstein, Germany by the cruise line's co-owner and exec vice president Kristin Karst.

The occasion was celebrated with a dockside cocktail reception, traditional religious blessing, local entertainment and a welcome from Lahnstein's Mayor, Peter Labonte.

The 156-pax *AmaKristina* will sail the Rhine River between Amsterdam and Basel.

Rabbitohs hop on Jewel



MORE than 200 South Sydney Members jumped aboard *Pacific Jewel* for a special four-night sailing from Sydney to Moreton Island last week.

The fans had the chance to rub shoulders with the club ceo and former players during the cruise, which included a welcome

reception, trivia, Q&A sessions and photo and autograph ops.

P&O Cruises is an Official Membership Partner of the South Sydney Rabbitohs.

Souths ceo Blake Solly is **pictured** (left) on *Pacific Jewel* with former players Roy Asotasi; Mario Fenech and Ben Lowe.

New Majestic sailings

PRINCESS Cruises has unveiled two 14-day Grand Asia Voyages between Shanghai and Singapore on *Majestic Princess*.

Launched in Europe last month, the vessel will homeport out of Sydney from Sep 2018-Mar 2019.

The new sailings visit Japan, South Korea, Vietnam & Thailand and the first leaves Shanghai on 25 Feb 2018 and the second sails out of Singapore on 11 Mar 2018.

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MSC Cruises 2017/18

THIS upcoming Northern winter will mark MSC Cruises' most comprehensive winter season, with two new ships set to come into operation.

MSC Meraviglia will launch in Jun and sail the Mediterranean for her inaugural season and *MSC Seaside* will be christened and begin operating itineraries in the Eastern and Western Caribbean come Dec.

Also new for the season are a range of new itineraries on *MSC Fantasia* and *MSC Orchestra*, along with a range of shore tours designed for food lovers.

Azamara Asia sale

SAVINGS of up to \$1,500 per stateroom are available on a range of Azamara Club Cruises' sailings in Asia.

The deal applies to select departures between 04 Nov 2017-26 Apr 2018 on *Azamara Journey* when booked by 31 May.

CLICK HERE for details.

Silversea world cruise

SILVERSEA'S 132-day world cruise 2019 aboard *Silver Whisper* is now open for bookings.

The voyage will visit 52 ports in 31 countries across five continents and include 16 overnight calls.

Nine writers will join the cruise and will each write a short story inspired by the regions visited.

Already confirmed are Paul Theroux and Pico Iyer, both travel writers and novelists.

CLICK HERE for more.

SeaLink initiatives

SEALINK Travel Group and the Foundation for National Parks and Wildlife (FNPW) will work together to strengthen tourism initiatives and infrastructure in national parks.

An agreement to be inked next week will allow SeaLink to coordinate conservation and wildlife tourism commitments through FNPW & raise awareness of environmental issues.

Viking's Egypt addition



VIKING Cruises is investing in Egypt, revealing it will launch a 48-passenger vessel called *Viking Ra* on the Nile in Mar 2018.

The ship has been recently acquired and stripped down to the steel for an extensive reno.

Once completed, the all-suite ship will feature three stateroom categories, as well as a spa, two jacuzzis and an outdoor pool.

Viking Ra will operate a 12-day Pharaohs & Pyramids itinerary where guests will spend three

nights at a hotel in Cairo before flying to Luxor to board the ship.

The seven-day roundtrip sailing to Aswan will be followed by a flight back to Cairo and a final night in the city.

"With her introduction, we will be one of the only Western companies to own and operate a ship on the Nile," said Michelle Black, managing director of Viking Cruises Australia and NZ.

Viking Ra's pool deck is **pictured**, more on **FACEBOOK**.



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Silversea incentive

AGENTS who make a new *Silver Muse* or *Silver Whisper* Canada/ New England cruise booking this month will receive a signature scarf designed to celebrate last month's launch of *Silver Muse* by renowned textiles firm Faliero Sarti - details 1300 306 872.



THE law of the sea obliges any sailor to come to the assistance of another vessel in need, but Royal Caribbean's *Harmony of the Seas* definitely went above and beyond in Feb this year.

The ship's captain, Gus Andersson, responded to an SOS call from the US Coast Guard, which had been notified that a boat was stranded in the ocean after running out of fuel.

The gigantic mega-liner adjusted her course to get to the GPS coordinates provided by the Coast Guard and came to the rescue, giving the potential castaways a top-up to get their vessel going again.

That wasn't all, though - the stranded sailors also received a mid-ocean pizza delivery service courtesy of *Harmony's* Sorrento's on-board pizzeria.

Andersson told passengers the group on the boat were in good spirits and didn't request any food or blankets.

"However there are a few things in life that are appreciated, such as a couple of pizzas when you are in the middle of the ocean, so we threw in a few of them for good measure," he said.

To Infinity and beyond!



TWELVE top-selling Infinity retail agents jumped aboard *Ovation of the Seas* recently for a five-night cruise from Singapore via Penang and Phuket.

The team mastered the vessel's bumper cars, iFly skydiving and Flowrider surfing experiences and enjoyed the on board entertainment, dining options and the North Star.

Pictured in the back row are: Tony Soden, Royal Caribbean; Sam Woods, Escape Travel Casuarina; Luke Graham, Flight Centre Plaza and Cody Johnson, Escape Travel Adelaide City.

In the front row are: Lisa Burge, Flight Centre Fremantle; Caitlin

Shannon, Infinity Cruise Atlantic; Chuon Chhan, Flight Centre Galleria; Crystal Emmerson, Escape Travel Burnside; Jenni Triffitt, Travel Associates Perchalla & Turner and Caroline Wickes, Flight Centre Baldivis.

Hanseatic steel cut

THE steel cutting for the first of Hapag-Lloyd Cruises' two new-build expedition ships, *Hanseatic nature* has been marked by an official ceremony at the Vard shipyard in Yulcea, Romania.

Both vessels will be built for the five-star segment, accommodate up to 230 guests, be built to Polar Class 6 standards and have 16 zodiacs and e-zodiacs on board.

Aqua Exp 17/18 brox

AQUA Expeditions has unveiled its 2017/18 brochure dedicated to hosted departures on *Aria Amazon* and *Aqua Mekong*.

The new release details the three-, four- and seven-night cruises hosted by Aqua's ceo Francesco Galli Zugaro, *Aria Amazon* exec chef Pedro Miguel Schiaffino and explorer Jean-Michel Cousteau - **CLICK HERE**.

Lindblad income slide

LINDBLAD Expeditions' net income for the first quarter dropped to \$0.6m, from \$10.5m in Q1 2016, attributed to voyages which had to be cancelled to conduct ship repairs.

Forward bookings for Lindblad Expeditions are up nearly 60% on the same period last year.

CLIA UPDATE

with Joel Katz MD, CLIA Australasia

CLIA Exec Partner Prog

CLIA recently announced that Tourism Australia has joined its Executive Partner program as a Diamond partner.

Tourism Australia joins 66 additional new Executive Partner members this year, who have seen the value of a strategic partnership with the cruise industry.

During the recent SEATRADE event in Fort Lauderdale in March, CLIA hosted more than 400 industry suppliers and cruise line executives during its annual Diamond Dinner, Business on the Beach and CLIA Connect events.

The global program, which launched in 2015, now boasts more than 300 industry suppliers worldwide, and is forecasted to welcome 100 new members in 2017.

The goal of the program is to create a dynamic and exclusive platform for our members to connect and we are continuing to create new events & opportunities to strengthen these links.

The cruise industry is undergoing unprecedented growth, and therefore provides extraordinary opportunities for its suppliers and service providers.

The Executive Partner program brings these partners together with our cruise line members to address issues and discuss innovative ideas to promote the continued development of the industry.

For more, visit cruising.org.au.

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