

CLIA “disappointed” at ban

CRUISE Lines International Association (CLIA) Australasia says it is “naturally disappointed” that the Government has extended its ban on cruise ships in Australian waters until 17 Jun.

The three-month extension of the biosecurity emergency arrangements was announced last night by Minister for Health Greg Hunt, who said the Australian Health Protection Advisory Committee (AHPPC) had recommended the “COVID-19 situation overseas continues to pose an unacceptable public health risk to Australia, including the emergence of more highly transmissible variants”.

The extension of the ban will mean cruise ships have been banished from local waters for a total of 15 months - although Hunt noted the Government continues to work with the cruise industry and other authorities

to “develop a framework for the staged resumption of cruise ships in a manner that is proportionate to the public health risk”.

CLIA MD Australasia Joel Katz said the organisation had been working with the Government on a high-level framework for the restart of domestic operations for more than six months now.

Despite the disappointment at a lack of an outcome thus far, CLIA “remains committed to working with agencies at a federal and state level,” he said, with the industry supporting over 18,000 jobs including travel agents, farmers, entertainers, tour operators, ports & marine services.

The minister’s statement also noted that the ongoing emergency determinations, which include restrictions on the entry of cruise vessels within Australian territory, “can be amended or repealed if no longer needed”.

Princess POLAR booking glitch

PRINCESS Cruises has apologised to travel agents after its key trade booking portal went down for several hours amid strong demand for the 2023 World Cruise, which went on sale for top-tier past passengers yesterday.

A number of **Cruise Weekly** readers expressed their frustration at the issues, which appear to reemerge every time a highly anticipated itinerary is released for bookings.

“It is one of the very rare sales opportunities for trade and the day has been a disaster,” one top selling agent told **CW**.

Princess Cruises Director of Sales & Marketing, Nick Ferguson, attributed the strong interest in the voyage to the “amazing job our trade partners have done in pre-registering their clients,” confirming the

cruise line had experienced “intermittent technical issues impacting bookings made via Polar Online, the contact centre and to our website”.

Ferguson apologised for the problems, adding that as a goodwill gesture, Princess would retrospectively add a \$50 per booking bonus commission “given the extra administration caused by these technical issues”.

He also noted that if an agents’ clients booked directly with Princess outside of office hours or at some other point yesterday “we’ll transfer those bookings back across in the coming days as requested”.

The early release of the 2023 World Cruise as well as a year-long program of four local ships (**CW** 18 Feb) had generated unprecedented demand, Ferguson said.



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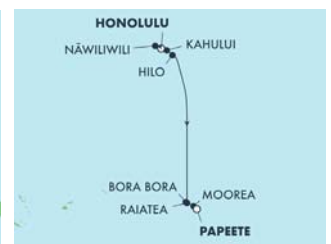
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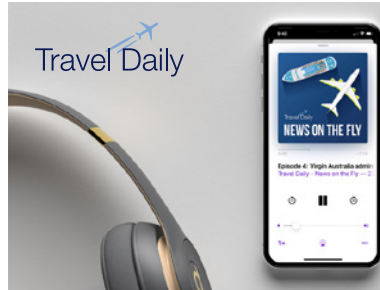
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Black high on cruise

GLOBAL demand for cruising is impacting capacity in local markets, according to Viking Managing Director ANZ Michelle Black.

As the global roll-out of coronavirus vaccines commence, Black believes there has been a subtle shift in consumer confidence, with cruise bookings for 2022 and 2023 picking up as travellers start making their future plans.

Black said this should be a wake-up call for locals.

"It is more important this year than ever before that anyone wanting to travel when the borders open does not delay in securing their preferred date for 2022 and 2023," she said.

"With no international travel from Australia and New Zealand for what could be 18 months, the demand for staterooms once the hold on travel is lifted will be huge.

Black said the demand for cruising is global, and the United Kingdom and United States markets, where cruising sentiment is generally more positive, are starting to lock in their future cruise plans.

"We know that the past 12 months has caused what we term "cancellation fatigue" amongst travellers, however people need to be aware that they might miss out if they delay any longer".

P&O Eden the way



P&O Cruises Australia has begun a video series celebrating rural destinations in Australia, beginning with the New South Wales South Coast town of Eden.

The video is fronted by Cruise Eden Coordinator Debbie Meers, who reinforced what a great team P&O Australia and the town is.

The line first called on Eden six years ago with *Pacific Pearl*, and has since visited on 25 separate occasions, bringing around 50,000 guests to the region.

Pacific Aria was also the first cruise ship to return to the town after the 2019-20 bushfires.

More destination videos are planned for other destinations, such as Airlie Beach in Queensland's Whitsundays, well known for its friendly volunteers.

P&O Director, Destination Management, Michael Mihajlov,

said the town was a natural starting point for the series.

"Our guests love Eden and the community there through organisations such as Cruise Eden has embraced cruising and the opportunities it delivers," Mihajlov said.

"With their enthusiasm they make each cruise ship visit an event in its own right adding unique local attractions such as the beachside Taste of Eden."

"We know that regional destinations are very keen to see the restart of cruising and the revival of cruise ship calls as soon as it is possible, and we can't wait to return," - [CLICK HERE](#).

Flagship *Pacific Explorer* was the first cruise ship to use Eden's new wharf extension when it opened two years ago; she is **pictured** with volunteers from Cruise Eden.

Scenic cites "advanced plans"

SCENIC Luxury Cruises & Tours is not issuing a formal statement about its new Kimberley *Scenic Eclipse* itineraries (*CW* breaking news), but has confirmed talks with state governments are "positive and advanced".

"We are still at the planning stage to potentially bring *Scenic Eclipse* to the Kimberley region during 2021," according to a Scenic spokesperson.

"However whilst we have been exploring opportunities to cruise in Australia, please be advised that Scenic Group has not made any formal announcements or media releases at this stage."

Eclipse is currently located in Croatia, and would need to sail across the globe in order to operate the proposed eight-voyage season starting 30 May which is currently being promoted via some of Scenic's key travel agent partners.

However, despite EDMs being actively sent to clients, and claims the season is booking out fast, the company noted "any information being circulated regarding dates, itineraries or experiences is speculative only."

The Scenic team is continuing to review regulatory requirements for operations in Australian coastal waters, the company said.




VIKING

Discovery

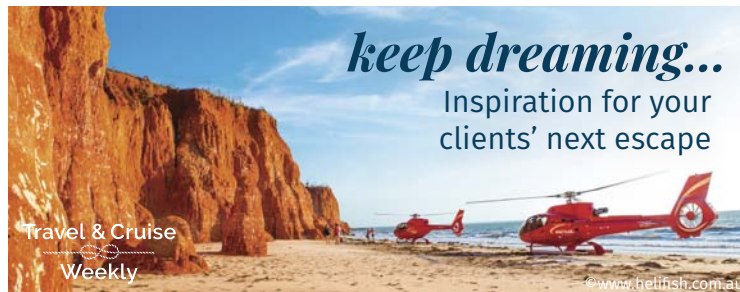
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MANY cruise lines are known for their weddings at sea, but funerals?

It seems a Port Lincoln woman has cornered that market.

Ngahuia Trewartha, who recognised a rapid divestment in traditional funeral arrangements, has started offering this special service for ocean lovers.

Ashes At Sea will scatter your remains off the coast of the Eyre Peninsula, while 75 of your loved ones watch from *Oceanic Victor*.

A jumbotron and PA system can be used for visual eulogies, and the vessel is licensed, ensuring you can be farewelled with a toast.

"People say to me, 'everything returns to the sea'," Trewartha told *The Advertiser*, adding "the family can always return to the sea to visit them, feel that breeze on their face and remember the person they loved."

Jump in the LGBT Queue



CELEBRITY Cruises has been celebrating gay pride with its industry partners at Sydney's Mardi Gras Film Festival.

The cruise line has partnered with Queer Screen, the event's organiser, to celebrate the Festival's 28th year of supporting queer filmmakers, and showcasing the diversity of queer creativity through film and video.

Famous for its same-sex weddings at sea, the partnership also further cements Celebrity's

commitment to diverse and inclusive communities, with the cruise line saying it was humbled to be named the Best Large Ship Cruise Line for LGBTQI+ Passengers at the Cruizie Awards for four years running.

Celebrity has also been voted one of the Best Places to Work for LGBTQ Equality by the Human Rights Campaign Foundation's Corporate Equality Index five years in a row.

As the Mardi Gras Film Festival winds down, Celebrity's sales team treated some well-deserving partners to a special screening of *Supernova* at the heritage-listed Randwick Ritz.

Pictured are Daragh Robbins, and Jessica Jones, Celebrity; Emily Bradford, Ecruising; Craig Chisholm, Ozcruising; Melissa Devlin, ittravel Peshurst; Gareth Evison, Cruise1st; Meg Hill, Cruise Express; Nic Cola, Cruise1st; Meg Hill, Cruise Express; Nicole Stojic, Celebrity; and Richard Boyce, Cruise Express.



Small ships, big news

SMALL ship cruising is continuing to raise hopes for our industry with Coral Expeditions, Scenic Luxury Cruises & Tours and Aurora Expeditions all announcing exciting Australian itineraries for 2021.

Tumby Bay on the Eyre Peninsula welcomed *Coral Adventurer* recently as it made a stop on a 10-night cruise throughout the state.

This was the first commercial cruise ship to ever dock in the regional town with Council hoping this is the first of many such visits.

A rousing community welcome was followed by numerous onshore activities all bringing tourism dollars to this seaside location.

Coral Expeditions will also recommence its cruising in WA with over 45 departures planned for 2021 catering to over 4,000 guests.

This will mean significant economic impact to the communities visited by these ships as well as the local tour operators.

Scenic Eclipse will set sail in WA with an eight-cruise Kimberley season and Aurora Expeditions is looking like it will enjoy a full season in Australia for the first time in 30 years.

While this type of cruising with ships under 100 passengers represents a small proportion of what we were seeing pre-COVID it is nonetheless an important boost to the industry and the sign of things to come.

We are delighted to hear passengers who might previously have gone offshore for their cruising commenting on the convenience and accessibility of these kinds of itineraries making us believe these might be here to stay.

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