



### Cruise Weekly today

**CRUISE Weekly's** CLIA Awards Special Edition features four pages of news and photos from Sat night's event, plus a full page from **Uniworld Boutique River Cruises**.

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## Kiwi legend inducted into CLIA HOF

**NEW** Zealand cruise legend Craig Harris from ISS-McKay was inducted into the Hall of Fame at the 21st celebration of the Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA) Cruise Industry Awards in Sydney on Sat.

Harris is known as an industry leader in New Zealand and has held his role at the cruise services company since 2008.

He also founded Cruise New Zealand in 1994, and has fostered collaborations between ports, cruise operators and the local tourism sector.

"Craig has not only shaped but significantly advanced the cruise sector in our region," CLIA Chair Ben Angell said.

"He is synonymous with innovation, dedication, and leadership, and his efforts have been pivotal in transforming New Zealand into a premier cruise destination," he said.

Below is the full list of winners:

- Small Cruise Agency of the Year, Aus - Cruise Express
- Cruise Agency of the Year (Small), New Zealand - YOU Travel Bethlehem
- Cruise Agency of the Year (Large), Australia - Phil Hoffmann Travel
- Online Cruise Agency of the Year - Ecruising and Clean Cruising
- Cruise Consultant of the Year, Australia - Byron Horne, Bicton Travel
- Cruise Consultant of the Year, New Zealand - Gail Littin, Pukekohe Travel
- Mobile/Home-Based Agent of the Year, Australia - Rose Febo, TravelManagers
- Broker of the Year, New Zealand - Zaheda Davies, NZ Travel Brokers
- Media Award - Imogen Eveson, *International*
- Traveller
- Rising Star, Australia - Vanessa Sokolji, Flight Centre Epping Plaza
- Rising Star, New Zealand - Jaimee Phelps, House of Travel Kapiti Coast
- Agency Cruise Promotion of the Year, Australia - My Cruises
- Agency Cruise Promotion of the Year, New Zealand - cruisedeals.co.nz
- Network Cruise Promotion of the Year - World Travellers, New Zealand
- Cruise Month Promotion of the Year - House of Travel, New Zealand
- Cruise Champion - Rhona Rodgers, MTA
- Cruise Line Champion - Australasia Christine Oliver, AmaWaterways
- Hall of Fame - Craig Harris, ISS-McKay New Zealand

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# We are winners and so say all of us

**THE** conviviality that the cruise sector is famous for was on full display at CLIA's Cruise Industry Awards over the weekend, with the dual winners of the 'Online Cruise Agency of the Year' category praising one another during their respective acceptance speeches.

The coveted award belonged to Ecruising Travel and Clean Cruising, with the judges unable to split the tremendous performances over both agencies over the last 12 months.

Despite going back-to-back in the category, Clean Cruising exercised plenty of humility after the win, with Director Jean Summers-Reeves admitting there is plenty to learn from its competitor Ecruising.

"We really are going to have to keep a very close eye on what they're doing and how they're doing it because clearly they are such a great business," Summers-Reeves told **Cruise Weekly**.

"Everyone deserves their own moment in the light for their own reasons but collectively we are all doing such a great job for the cruise industry," she added.

When asked for his reflections on the big win, Ecruising Director Dean Palmer was quick to credit Clean Cruising on their success, but also pointed to the award



representing just how far his company had come since the dark doldrums of the pandemic.

"We were at the bottom when COVID struck, there were a lot of things that we needed to do to grow again, and so to get this award now in 2024 after all those hard times, it means so much to me and my team," Palmer said.

"There really was a lot of hard work and a lot of hard graft and we did also have to rely on a lot of support from our shareholders as well so this one really is a team victory," he added. **AB**

**Pictured top:** the Ecruising team accepting their half of the award; **pictured bottom:** Casey Russell,

Jean Summers, and Dan Russell from Clean Cruising receive their share of the prize.

## Katz lauds agents

**CRUISE** Lines International Association Managing Director Joel Katz paid tribute to the "extraordinary era for the cruise sector" in Australia, in his opening address at the 21st Cruise Industry Awards.

The sector's success story of late has been marked by resilience and innovation, Katz said, which has opened up vast opportunities, with the role of the travel advisor being particularly pivotal.

"Your expertise, passion, and unwavering commitment has been instrumental in shaping unforgettable experiences for travellers and fuelling the prosperity of our industry dreams to life, and have significantly contributed to the economic and cultural vibrancy of the communities that we touch," Katz said.

"The accolades we celebrate tonight are not just about individual successes, but a reflection of our shared vision and collaborative efforts," - more from Katz on **page 4**.

## Icons recognised

**TWO** industry icons were recognised at the 21st CLIA Awards on the weekend.

Christine Oliver from AmaWaterways was awarded Cruise Line Champion and Rhona Rodgers from Mobile Travel Agents scooped up the Cruise Champion gong.

"I'm completely flabbergasted that I have won...I have been the bridesmaid for a very long time over the years and I've been nominated numerous times," Oliver told **CW**.

"The fact that my peers keep nominating me is just amazing...I've worked with such incredible travel advisors and professionals," she said.



## The Chat

with Jenny

A conversation with Jennifer Gaskin

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Monday 11th March 2024

**IT MIGHT** be Oscars season, but the celebrities and well-loved personalities of the Australian and New Zealand cruise industry shone brightly on the CLIA Awards red carpet on Sat night at The Star in Sydney.

More than 500 attendees descended upon the venue, including Australian Travel Industry Association CEO Dean Long, Clean Cruising General Manager & Director Dan Russell, and more.

Hosted by entertainer Tim Campbell, the gala dinner and presentation showcased excellence within the cruise industry across 18 categories.

"Cruise fans are more excited than ever about the cruise opportunities available to them across our region and around the world, and our travel agent

community has played a huge part in fuelling that passion," said CLIA Managing Director Joel Katz.

"Cruising is enjoying undeniable success right now in Australia and New Zealand, and these awards are our way of thanking those who drive so much of that success." JHM

## CLIA twinkles under The Star Sydney



**THE** Aurora Expeditions team looking its spiffy best.



**CLIA** Managing Director Joel Katz, and Head of International Training & Development Peter Kollar with Australian Travel Industry Association Director of Membership & Industry Affairs Richard Taylor and Managing Director Dean Long.



**WHY** can't we be friends? Clean Cruising General Manager & Director Dan Russell and Flight Centre Travel Group's Caroline Hitchen.



**IGNITE** Travel Group General Manager Michael Middleton and The Luxury Travel Collection General Manager Nikki Glading.



**UNIWORLD** MD Alice Ager with Ponant's Deb Corbett.



**CLIA'S** newest Hall of Famer Craig Harris with Chair Ben Angell.



**ABERCROMBIE** & Kent MD Deb Fox and VP Sales & Partnerships Sudan Haberle.



**AZAMARA** Director of Sales Victoria Chigwidden and Key Account Manager Shannon Morgan.



**REGENT** Seven Seas Cruises Vice President Sales & General Manager Lisa Pile and SVP & Chief Sales Officer Steve Odell with Aurora Expeditions Chief Marketing Officer Hayley Peacock-Gower.



**CRUISEHQ** GM Caroline Hitchen, The Luxury Travel Collection GM Nikki Glading, and Quark Expeditions Regional Director Tenille Hunt, RAA Cruise Product Manager Brooke Rand, and CruiseHQ Marketing Manager Caitlyn Paris.





**THERE'S** a powerful hex that often strikes the world of sport known as the 'Commentator's Curse', where an overconfident or presumptive boast can lead to an unexpected derailment.

While New Zealanders all too easily fall back on their rugby superiority in the endless trans-Tasman rivalry, cricket is a more even battle.

However that didn't stop newly-minted CLIA Hall of Fame Inductee Craig Harris from riling up the crowd during his acceptance speech by talking up a Black Caps victory in the second cricket test match against Australia.

"Well thank you, that sure is a surprise," Harris said on stage.

"I guess the next big surprise will be when New Zealand wins the cricket test in Christchurch this weekend," Harris added, to rousing laughter and jeers.

Despite New Zealand taking control of the match early on, Harris didn't count on Australian wicket-keeper Alex Carey spoiling Harris' fun.

A stirring knock of 98 not out helped Australia turn the tide and make Harris eat his words.

While Australia had the last laugh in the cricket, **Cruise Weekly** sends its heartfelt and genuine congratulations to Harris for a stellar career and a richly deserved induction for an amazing contribution to the local cruise industry.

## Rising stars celebrated



**THE** next generation of travel leaders was celebrated at the CLIA Awards on the weekend, with this year's Rising Star awards presented to Australia's Vanessa Sokolji (**pictured**) from Flight Centre Epping Plaza and New Zealand's Jaimee Phelps (**inset**) from House of Travel Kapiti Coast.

The Kiwi revealed that she had no prior experience before entering the cruise industry, but as soon as she set foot onto a ship for the first time, she decided it was a career that she wanted to pursue.

"I didn't know anything about cruise before I came into the industry, so training has definitely helped me succeed in selling," she told **Cruise Weekly**, adding how much she appreciated the support of the agency's owner-operator, Jo Coolen, as well as her own husband.

"I didn't have a career of my own. I had kids very young, so when I wanted to get into travel, he supported me all the way," Phelps said.



"I've found what I love and I just want to succeed," she shared.

Meanwhile, Sokolji has also just completed her first year working in the cruise industry, and noted the impressive growth within the sector in recent years.

"It's so crazy, it's so busy, the clientele is absolutely amazing," Sokolji enthused.

"It truly is an industry that has got so much growth, especially coming out of COVID," she told **Cruise Weekly**.

"It's one of the best industries that has bounced back so quickly. I'm just so excited to see where my journey goes from here. It's only the beginning!" *JHM*

## CLIA UPDATE



with Joel Katz  
MD, CLIA Australasia

### Congratulations!

**AT THE** peak of a spectacular summer cruise season in Australasia, there couldn't have been a better time to celebrate the strength of CLIA's travel agency community.

Our 21st Cruise Industry Awards were not only a celebration of our industry's top achievers, but also a tribute to travel agents across our region and the role they have played in driving the industry's new prosperity.

Each of the winners has been a standout achiever, showing ingenuity, persistence, creativity and passion, and each has approached their success in a unique and personal way, proving again that travel advisors bring that essential human touch to their profession.

Though all different, many of this year's winners shared key qualities - a love for the industry, a focus on knowledge, and a generosity among colleagues.

In the case of our Cruise Champion categories, this extended to the interests of the wider cruise community and the role we all play as ambassadors for cruising.

I'm incredibly proud of CLIA's travel agent membership in Australasia, and I believe we excel beyond our peers overseas.

Congratulations to our winners and finalists - you typify the #WeAreCruise spirit that makes us one of the most successful cruise regions in the world.





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