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C360 special edition

TODAY'S special edition of **Cruise Weekly** features eight pages of all the news from Fri's Cruise360 conference.

C360 now two days

CRUISE Lines International Association's Cruise360 conference is making the hotly anticipated move of extending to two days (CW breaking news Fri).

Managing Director Joel Katz announced the news at this year's Cruise360 conference on Fri, with the annual congress also returning to Brisbane's Royal International Convention Centre.

The event this year moved to what many referred to as a "one-and-a-half-day" format, with a day of river cruise product training before the conference proper.

CLIA Chair urges Australian cooperation

THE Australian cruise ecosystem needs to come together to ensure the country remains a competitive prospect for international operators, Cruise Lines International (CLIA) Chair Peter Little (pictured) has said.

The Carnival Corporation head, speaking at Fri's Cruise360 conference in Sydney, emphasised the high price of doing business in Australia, with key costs including marine fuel.

The local cruise industry needs to do its best to combat these rising costs, Little said.

"The reality is there are so many stakeholders involved with the price and structure within the network that we, with the clear support and all the influences we have in the room, need to come together and start having the conversations with those responsible for pricing and regulatory issues," he said.



"[We need to] start the conversation about the consequences, and how we're going to make Australia an internationally competitive market, because the reality is the cruise market is global, and Australia is playing in that global market," Little added.

The isolation of Australia as a country makes working together as a united cruise nation even more important, he suggested.

"We're a network of operations, so if one part of the network falls over, then it can have consequences to the rest of the network," Little explained.

"Sydney and Brisbane can't

sustain the cruise industry on their own as two standalone ports - we need destinations to go to.

"If destinations within the network fall over because of cost, and we can't go there, then we can't make an itinerary, and that will impact the overall deployment," he added.

The comments come following the New Zealand Cruise Association (NZCA) Conference earlier this month, where the stunning cost of doing business in the island country was revealed (CW 16 Aug).

Little's colleague, Carnival Corp Chief Strategy & External Affairs Officer Teresa Lloyd also revealed at the NZCA Conference the difficulty of working with the New Zealand Government to secure the same reasonable operating environment Australia is hoping for (CW 20 Aug). MS

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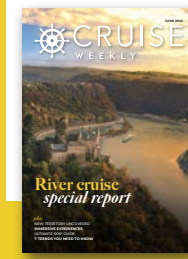
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“Wonderful” local growth opportunity

PONANT Chief Executive Officer Deb Corbett (pictured) has opened up about the range of opportunities available in Australia to the luxury and expedition cruise sectors.

Speaking at this year’s Cruise360, Corbett said Ponant is seeing increased demand for its expeditions, with Australia in particular set to benefit.

“Guests are wanting high value, deep immersion experiences, and to do [them] on small expedition vessels that are visiting remote and regional areas,” she said.

“We can further develop luxury exploration travel in remote and regional areas, and what’s so good about that is they are inaccessible to day trippers.”

Corbett said the ability to make a difference to rural towns and remote communities - particularly working with Australia’s indigenous peoples - is what most



excites her about the future of the cruise industry.

“We’re also seeing experiences in Papua New Guinea, East Indonesia, and Raja Ampat, they’re becoming more popular, and that lends itself for us to further develop Darwin and Cairns as the gateways for those cruise programs,” she said.

“Lastly, exclusive access, we all hear about travelling off the beaten track, or going on

that path less travelled...does everyone know that in our own backyard, only 1,800 people get to land on Australia’s Macquarie Island each year, and only 1,100 people get to land on Endeby and Campbell islands in the New Zealand Subantarctic (Islands)?

“It is privileged access at its best, and it’s in our backyard, so there is a wonderful growth opportunity for the luxury boutique sector.” *MS*

CLIA LIVE in 2025

CRUISE Lines International Association is planning a new CLIA LIVE series for next year, giving agents access to invaluable in-person product training in major cities across the region.

The Association told **Cruise Weekly** the highly popular event series will be back bigger and better next year.

“We take great pride in the fact that CLIA agents are not only among the best-trained and most knowledgeable professionals in our region, but also consistently lead in cruise sales,” Managing Director Joel Katz said.

“Our aim is to elevate that success into the future.”

This year’s two-day CLIA LIVE events took place in six major cities across the region.

More from Katz on **page 8** of this **CW** special issue.

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Pre- and post-cruise “a missed opportunity”

SPECIALIST cruise travel agents can create a point of difference for themselves and their business by packaging pre- and post-cruise land arrangements into a complete holiday, Cruise Express Managing Director Meg Hill stated.

Speaking during the ‘Beyond the Cruise’ panel at Cruise360 last Fri, Hill said for clients new to the business and new to cruise, full holiday packages built around a cruise have great potential to create loyalty.

“The thing that we’ve seen post pandemic is that there’s such huge demand now, both on an FIT basis and with our groups, for us to provide a complete package with wonderful pre- and post-experiences,” Hill commented.

Port of Seattle Tourism Development Manager Chantelle Lusenbrink added too many travellers find themselves not allowing enough time in



destination (pictured) to enjoy their time pre- and post-cruise.

“Often, I’m asked by cruise pax ‘how do I get to that beautiful, 14,000ft mountain in your skyline that is so close I can almost touch it?’” Lusenbrink said.

She recalled how often, cruise passengers want to enjoy sightseeing pre- or post-departure, but rarely have enough time to take it all in.

“So for us, that’s the opportunity

and for you, it’s the commissions that you get by allowing your clients to have more time in places like Seattle that have amazing things to offer.”

Holland America and Seabourn Senior Director Destination Development, Mike Mihajlov, said the quintessential land and sea package would have to be Alaska, but places like Japan and Norway also have complementary packages perfect to couple on

either side of a cruise.

Carnival Corporation, which owns Holland America Line and Seabourn among its suite of cruise brands, owns and operates the McKinley Chalet Resort and Princess Wilderness Lodge in Alaska, promoting both as ideal pre- and post-cruise options.

“One of our briefs is to find experiences that aren’t typically available to guests,” Mihajlov said.

“For example, we found a restaurant in Japan that had never hosted non-Japanese [guests], yet [it is] a Michelin-starred restaurant and we have special dispensation to visit this place, which has a beautiful 13-course degustation menu that is out of this world.

“I encourage all advisors to make the effort to get to these places, particularly places you’re passionate about, because they’re the ones you can sell.” ML



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Advisors playing bigger role for cruise

ADVISORS are playing a much bigger role in getting consumers on cruises today, according to a panel of cruise line experts at Cruise360 on Fri.

The panel, made up of executives from Regent Seven Seas Cruises (RSSC), MSC Cruises, Uniworld Boutique River Cruises, Princess Cruises, and Aurora Expeditions, declared the travel trade has rebuilt the knowledge and experience lost during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Responding to an audience question pondering what percentage of bookings are direct versus through the trade, Princess Senior Vice President Stuart Allison (pictured at the conference with Director Public Relations Meg Koffel) wasn't afraid to jump in, despite audible intrigue from delegates.

Allison said while direct bookings were popular as



the world emerged from the pandemic to the point where "we were not really set up to be able to handle this", the tide had well and truly turned.

"In the last year to 18 months, the trade has come roaring back to the point now where we're expecting the mix of direct versus trade bookings to go back to where it was before the pandemic," Allison told the audience, and the panel's moderator, *Cruise Weekly* Publisher Damian Francis.

"Certainly, for our business, it is dominated by trade bookings."

RSSC Vice President Sales & General Manager Lisa Pile shared

similar thoughts.

"You are so important to us - the majority of our business is through the trade, and the reason we pay good commission is so that you look after our clients.

"There's no such thing as direct business being free, because it has to be serviced, so that's where [advisors] come into it.

"Your business is very, very important to us, because you service the clients, and you look after them, so thank you."

Direct marketing is also beneficial to agents, argued Aurora Head of Global Sales David Tanguay, as it educates the consumer on available product.

"As cruise lines, we all do direct marketing, but it also benefits agents because a lot of clients do their own research, and then they contact [advisors] for the final advice or to support in their decision," he asserted. *MS*

Lux pax changing

LUXURY cruise lines will have to be particularly cognisant of the Great Wealth Transfer currently underway, Ponant Chief Executive Officer Deb Corbett said.

The newly promoted leader of the French line said the phenomenon of baby boomers leaving significant wealth to their heirs will mean luxury operators will have to adapt to changing demographics.

"What that's doing is making the newcomer to our market much younger," she explained.

"We're finding we've got this new luxury client emerging, and it's this incredible mix between this traditional luxury client and [the] adoption of this emerging client.

"So we're finding that we have to switch our strategies to counteract what's happening in the market."



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CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR WINNERS



It was great to see so many of our valued travel partners at CLIA Cruise360. Thank you to all who entered our competition and sharing the fun with us on your socials - we really enjoyed seeing all your entries!

Huge congratulations to Louise Dann from Hunter Travel Group and Caitlyn Paris from CruiseHQ who were our lucky winners. We hope you enjoy your VIP Shopping Experience and the Camilla gown of your choice!

Education key to sinking cruise myths

IT IS crucial for agents to bust through cruise myths and misconceptions among clients who are fresh to the market, Chris Watson of Chris Watson Travel told attendees during the Cruise360 'Seizing the Potential: New-to-Cruise Trends and Insights' panel.

Watson emphasised how important it is for agents to ensure their knowledge is up to par, so that they are ready to cut through any hesitations from travellers who are considering booking their first cruise.

"We can quickly close those barriers by knowing our product and knowing what the right product is for everyone," he said.

"Before they ask the questions, you already know the answers... so make sure we're educated, make sure that the client is educated," he added.

Watson assured the audience



hesitation among new-to-cruise travellers is not a huge hurdle, as long as advisors are confident in their knowledge and their ability to pass that information onto their clients.

"They'll feel safe just from your knowledge...or picking up your phone and showing them a photo of what you did [and] how you felt, what your balcony cabin looked like, and having that actual personal experience and bringing

it back to that."

The discussion also talked through value perceptions, barriers and myths, as well as growth opportunities and engagement strategies to help advisors tap the valuable new-to-cruise segment. JM

Pictured is Watson with Champagne Travel Managing Director Michelle Hartland and Royal Caribbean International Head of Sales Dave Humphreys.

It runs in the family

GENERATIONAL cruising plays a key role in attracting new-to-cruise customers, particularly the younger generation, Michelle Hartland, Managing Director at Champagne Travel, highlighted during the 'Seizing the Potential' panel session.

"We're using our clientele to market our business...we really encourage them to share their journeys and their cruising experiences with their family," she explained.

Hartland described how the all-inclusiveness of a cruise appeals to families looking to celebrate milestones together, such as a grandkids' 18th birthday, or a grandparents' 50th wedding anniversary.

"There's nothing more exciting than watching the generational pattern happen," Hartland added.

THANK YOU FOR VISITING THE MSC CRUISES TEAM AT CRUISE360

A big thank you to CLIA Cruise360 Australasia for hosting such a fantastic event! It was wonderful to connect with everyone and highlight the unique features and benefits of sailing with MSC Cruises.



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The internet 'can't compete with luxury agents'

TRAVEL advisors have been urged to remember the personal connection they offer a client gives them a significant advantage over the internet when it comes to booking travel.

Tauck Global Vice President of Sales and Service Steve Spivak told advisors at Cruise360 the luxury travel experience begins with the value, care and expertise clients receive from their advisor.

Spivak's comments were among a number of strategies canvassed during a chat with luxury doyenne Robyn Sinfield (**pictured**).

"People cannot get a luxury experience from the internet," Spivak commented.

"The internet will sell them whatever they ask for [but] the luxury is being heard, the luxury is being valued, the luxury is the inquisitive nature in all of you, helping them to find the perfect match," he added.



"Understanding why they're travelling, which only you can do, will help to match them to the product that will meet their needs," he added.

Do that well, Spivak added, and once they're in-destination, tour operators like Tauck will complete the equation by helping families connect with each other and with the destination.

Spivak and Sinfield agreed

experiences are what makes a luxury holiday, not necessarily staying in ultra-luxury hotels.

"About 80% of our journeys in the US go to the national parks," Spivak explained.

"When we take our guests to the national parks of the United States...we stay in the hotels that are within national parks themselves," Spivak explained.

When it comes to marketing,

Spivak urged agents to adopt the side-by-side comparison tactic, which not only helps clients find the right product for them, but can also help with upselling, especially in today's modern world of mass marketing.

"Once you have your clients sitting there and you get them interested in river cruise or ocean cruise, many times they're thinking about the commercial they saw or the letter in the mail they received, but it doesn't really fulfil their needs.

"But once you start to compare the entry level cruise but it costs extra for the drinks package, extra for shore excursions, extra for gratuities, then you line it up with the truly inclusive offering, they will see the value being greater with all-inclusive," Spivak added.

"I'm also not going to get a bill at the end that's going to ruin everything that happened." ML

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Cruise360 celebrates biggest-ever conference

CRUISE Lines International Association (CLIA) held its biggest-ever Cruise360 conference on Fri, with around 850 attendees turning out at the ICC Sydney.

Attendees heard from cruise industry leaders such as CLIA Chair and Carnival Corporation Country Manager Peter Little, Norwegian Cruise Line Vice President & Managing Director Ben Angell, Ponant Chief Executive Officer Deb Corbett, Royal Caribbean International Vice President & Managing Director Gavin Smith, and more.

Attendees also enjoyed the largest Cruise360 trade show ever held, with almost 50 exhibitors from all different sectors of the cruise industry.



THE CLIA team celebrates another successful Cruise360.



CLIA Managing Director Joel Katz with the MSC Cruises team.



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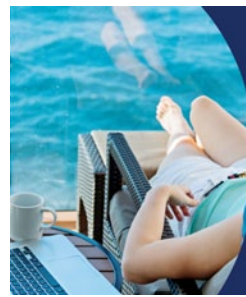
THE Uniworld Boutique River Cruises team in their now-trademark Camilla.



THE CruiseHQ team: Caitlyn Paris, Viktoryia Shliazhko, Carina Mullen, Caroline Hitchen, and Astrid Maier.



THE Regent Seven Seas Cruises team, led by Vice President Sales & General Manager Lisa Pile.



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CRUISE360 MC James O’Loughlin (**pictured**) is as professional as they come, but as it turns out, even after years of hosting the annual event, he still gets some of the cruise lines’ names wrong.

Lowlights of O’Loughlin’s spell on Fri included “C’nard” (apparently pronounced without the “u”), and “Tok”, when referring to the 99-year-old United States-based river cruise line.

However O’Loughlin took the crowd’s laughter in his stride, and next year will have two days of cruise brands to master - he’s lucky ‘Hurtigruten’ is not a CLIA member.



SILVERSEA executive Conrad Combrink may hold the travel industry’s record for most visits to Antarctica.

The expedition veteran revealed on a panel at Cruise360 on Fri he has been to Antarctica more than 80 times - 82, to be precise.

The revelation brought on a smattering of applause, followed by uproarious laughter, when moderator Anthony Goldman asked Combrink if the destination had changed much.

Land boosts expedition



ADVISORS should be sourcing future expedition cruisers from the land adventure sector, believes Silversea SVP Expeditions, Destination, & Itinerary Management Conrad Combrink (**pictured**).

Speaking at Fri’s Cruise360 conference, the Silversea exec said although ocean cruisers will occasionally try an expedition, it is adventurous land travellers who are a key source market.

“A lot of new-to-cruise come via expedition...you don’t actually have to go invent new expedition clients, you have them already,” Combrink told advisors.

“Don’t look necessarily for an expedition client within your cruise portfolio, look within that portfolio of clients who will go to Himalayas, that client who will go on safari, that’s your expedition client,” he added.

“It’s only now people are putting [adventure holidays] into the context of cruising, and we see a lot of non-cruisers coming towards expedition.”

The polar regions, the Galapagos, and the Kimberley are key destinations for the first-time expedition cruiser, Combrink said.

The Silversea veteran also cited multigenerational families as a rising key source market for expedition voyages, as the average age aboard the cruise line’s ships drops.

He said the average age on an expedition is no longer between 65 and 72.

“That’s changed...we are seeing a demographic that goes into the thirties,” Combrink explained.

“We are now seeing a lot more multigenerational families, so you should not discount the Kimberly, Galapagos, Antarctica... it does offer great opportunity for multigenerational travel.

“We are seeing shorter voyages; traditionally in the expedition industry, we have longer voyage of 18 to 21 days,” he said.

“When I started, a voyage shorter than 14 days didn’t exist...we are now shifting that,” Combrink added. *MS*



CLIA UPDATE

with Joel Katz
MD, CLIA Australasia

What’s next for agents

THIS year’s Cruise360 Australasia conference and exhibition was undoubtedly one of our best.

We’re already discussing how we can raise the bar for Brisbane next year.

But there will be plenty more for CLIA travel agents to get involved in before then.

CLIA’s global mission is to advocate, educate, and promote the cruise industry, and here in Australasia, we have a packed calendar of initiatives designed to empower our travel agent members so they can be a part of our success.

First up is Cruise Month, kicking off in just a few weeks.

This Oct will bring a whole month of marketing and social media initiatives to help celebrate all things cruise, and we have a new Cruise Month toolkit and webinar series to help CLIA members be a part of our #LoveCruise campaign.

We’re also gearing up for our 22nd Cruise Industry Awards in Sydney on 08 Mar, so now’s the time to think about nominations.

Our training programs will continue to be a huge focus, and we’re planning new options and updates to ensure CLIA agents remain at the cutting edge.

We’re also particularly excited to be named a finalist again for NTIA’s ‘Most Outstanding Travel Industry Training Institution’ award, which is a huge endorsement.

