



## Briggs seeks end to false pricing

Coral Princess CEO Tony Briggs is hopeful of more credible pricing for expedition cruising in Australia.

**THE** change of ownership of Orion Expedition Cruises has been welcomed by rival operator Coral Princess Cruises as an opportunity to be rid of "false prices" for products such as expedition cruises in the Kimberley region.

As head of the Australian company, Tony Briggs told **CW** that local ship owners had struggled to compete against international vessels offering large discounts to consumers.

"We pioneered the concept of expedition cruising in the Kimberley in 1995 and we never discounted – only for past guests, groups and charters," he said.

"The biggest change in the past six or

seven years has been the level of discounting occurring in the market by foreign-owned, foreign-flagged, foreign-crewed ships with a much lower cost base, who don't employ Australian workers or pay Australian taxes, so it was a challenge for all of us to compete."

Coral Princess, North Star Cruises, Kimberley Quest and The Great Escape were forced to match the lower fares, Briggs said, which had a dramatic effect on business.

"We couldn't grow to our full potential, and there was no chance for new local operators to enter the market," he said.

"Hopefully we're coming out of that now – we just want a level playing field."

Briggs said he was "heartened" by recent comments earlier this month by *Orion's* new owner Sven Lindblad that he would "restore credibility in pricing" for expeditions in the region (**CW** 04 Jun).

"When there's a false price being set to allow for discounting, it creates a lot of confusion in the market, which is not good for operators or consumers," Briggs said.

He urged agents to keep in mind the differences between the experiences on itineraries offered by local ships compared to ships owned by foreign companies.

"When they put clients on an Australian coastal cruise on an international ship, it's not an Australian cruise – they have to go to an international port, such as Timor.

"We're proud to have Australian-flagged and Australian-crewed ships in the Kimberley for six months of the year offering more departures than any other operator," he said.

*Coral Princess*, *Coral Princess II* and *Oceanic Discoverer* also sail in the Great Barrier Reef, New Zealand, New Guinea, Melanesia, Cape York and Arnhem Land.

## Spotlight on Royal Princess

**PRINCESS** Cruises is promoting the gleaming new *Royal Princess* in today's **CW** - see **page 5**.

## Arison makes way at Carnival

**CARNIVAL** Corporation has split the duties of chairman and CEO in a move which sees Micky Arison step down as CEO, handing the reigns to long serving board member Donald Arnold but remaining the majority shareholder.

"I have been discussing this with the board for some time now and feel the timing is right to align our company with corporate governance best practices and turn over the reins after 34 years as CEO," Arison said.

"Arnold is an exceptional professional with extensive experience in organisational leadership who will bring a fresh perspective to the company".

A photo of the two men shaking hands was posted with the announcement on Twitter, with Donald set to officially take control of the cruise giant on 03 Jul.

## Safety a strong selling tool

**CLIA** chief executive Christine Duffy has urged agents to highlight the cruise industry's ongoing commitment to safety as a way to reach out to potential first-time cruisers.

Duffy said that despite a couple of incidents in the last year that made international news headlines, more than 21 million people worldwide were forecasted to take a cruise in the 2013 calendar year.

"That's more than the population of New York City, Los Angeles & Miami combined," she said.

## So much cruising news

Today's issue of **CW** features four pages of news and a page from **Princess Cruises**.

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### Cruise News & Views...

## Cruising for the disabled

WHILST attending Cruise3Sixty last week in Vancouver, I met an agent who had a retail business solely focused on cruise passengers with special needs.

When concentrating on a niche in any business you have to be focused. A great example of this was this particular agent who handed me his business card which was not only printed in ink but also in braille – very clever.

This had me thinking further. Cruising is possibly the most convenient way for the disabled to visit places of interest around the world.

Most cruise ships today offer an increasing number of wheel chair accessible cabins and have continued to improve public facilities to make them more user friendly for those with physical impairments.

There are numerous websites that offer services for this audience but the most sensible approach for you would be to approach the cruise line that most interests your clients once you have qualified them.

Remember, when looking at areas within any market, discovering your own niche is what will make you stand out from your competitors. Anything that is unique has a real value, and the more unique, the greater the value!

If you can place an emphasis on your own personal advice, service, knowledge and empathy you will quickly find an emotional connection with potential clients that will make you a stronger consultant.

## Training to remain a CLIA focus

Travel agents globally are set to benefit from a redesigned training program to be launched next year, CLIA ceo Christine Duffy has revealed.

ADDRESSING attendees at the Cruise3Sixty conference in Vancouver, which wrapped up earlier this week, Duffy said that although the organisation was “evolving” to better appeal to CLIA’s new international members - of which Australia earlier this year became one - travel agents would not be abandoned.

Evolution of the organisation’s focus to agent training would see more online sessions be made available, although a more direct approach involving face-to-face sessions would not be done away with.

As a result, an improved training structure with a larger online presence would next year be introduced to allow the entire CLIA member community to take advantage of the organisation’s entire suite of training material, which currently encompasses 38 modules covering everything from sales to cruise safety.

Duffy reiterated her passion that travel agents had a long, strong and essential presence in the role of booking cruise travel for passengers, with the message hit home through a series of short videos from cruise line bosses stating their belief in the important roles agents play.

“Agents and advisors who understand their clients and who can guide them through the myriad of choices will be valued and necessary, and will be very successful in their own right,” Duffy said.

She added that CLIA was working to a goal of making its certification globally recognised, to help passengers locate a knowledgeable agent

to ease their booking process when the public domain is flooded with advertising.

“So if you’re not CLIA certified, I urge you to enroll today and get started,” Duffy said.

“We want to support & recognise people who have made the investment in certification”.

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## Seabourn School's out for maiden graduate

**ENROLMENT** in the Seabourn Academy, which was launched earlier this year, has proven a boon among agents keen to improve their knowledge of luxury cruises.

There is now more than 150 agents signed up to the online training program, with many having already progressed through the modules and successfully graduated.

The first to do so was Rachelle Matheson of Jigsaw Travel in the Melbourne suburb of Prahran, who was surprised recently by two Seabourn executives to present her with her graduation certificate.

Seabourn vice president of int'l sales and marketing Joe Slattery, on a visit to Australia, joined with local Seabourn director of sales and marketing Tony Archbold to meet with Rachelle and congratulate her on being the first Australian agent to complete the training course.

"In line with the continued growth in demand for luxury products, consultants are showing a strong desire to learn as much as they can about Seabourn," Archbold said.

Matheson concurred, saying she was greatly impressed with the level of detail in the course, encouraging other agents to enrol.

"We have a lot of repeat clientele that cruise on Seabourn and as I haven't cruised myself, it was a great opportunity to learn more about



the cruise line," she said.

As an incentive for Australian agents, the first 50 to complete the program will receive a bonus \$100 commission on their first Seabourn booking if made within 60 days of completion.

Matheson is **pictured** above centre with Joe Slattery and Tony Archbold.

## Fire repairs taking a bit longer

**TWO** further scheduled departures on Hapag-Lloyd's *MS Hanseatic* vessel have been scrapped due to repairs from a fire earlier this month taking longer than expected to finish, with a 14 Jul & 01 Aug departure shelved.

## APT Luxury Small Ship guide

**NEW** Private Yacht and Expedition voyages feature in a newly released Luxury Small Ship brochure from APT.

Itineraries are operated by seven vessels including the *MS Island Sky*, *Sea Explorer*, *Sea Cloud II*, *Oceanic Discoverer* and *Coral Princess*.

Highlighted voyages in the guide include the Spice Islands and Beyond - an 18 day cruise on the *MS Caledonian Sky* departing 19 Aug 2014 and priced from \$12,495ppts, with new components added including a motorised underwater camera & scuba diving equipment.



**DARLING** Harbour mainstay attraction Sea Life Sydney Aquarium has celebrated its 25th birthday with a different sort of party.

Attended by a Leopard Shark, Black Tip Reef Shark, Grey Reef Shark, Smalltooth Sawfish and dozens of tropical fish, several aquatic guests descended into the world's largest Great Barrier Reef tank to celebrate the milestone underwater.

The human attendees donned fancy dress and "blew out" candles on an inflatable birthday cake to mark a quarter century of success of the harbourside attraction.

"To celebrate the milestone this way seemed a fitting gesture to recognise and celebrate the attractions 25-year journey," senior aquarist Amy Wilkes said.

Over the coming school holidays, the Aquarium will be showcasing a number of historical photos and videos, also releasing a special 25th anniversary souvenir book available for purchase.





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## Face to Face: Jarrod Pask General Manager: Cruiseabout Australia

Welcome to Face to Face, where we chat to cruise industry leaders.

### Why did you get into the cruise industry?

I have worked in travel for many years, but wanted to move into what is, in my opinion, the industry's most exciting and dynamic sector. The growth of the cruise industry is phenomenal and the potential amazing, so it's a great time to be involved.

### Where do you see Cruiseabout Australia in five years from now?

With Cruiseabout's position as the number one cruise retailer in Australia firmly cemented with a total of 100 retail stores by that time. Our people are the key to our success, so an ongoing commitment toward staff development, incentives and rewarding company opportunities is important so that Cruiseabout can continue being the industry leaders well into the future.

### What is the key to your success?

I strongly believe that Cruiseabout's success can be attributed to three key focuses – rewarding and developing our people to create meaningful long term career paths, delivering a customer experience that exceeds all expectations, and fostering close industry relationships. To be successful all three need to work in tandem.

### What is your favourite destination, and why?

I lived in Japan for many years and have a great affinity with the country, so a cruise around Japan is always a favourite.

### What is the next "hot spot" in cruising destinations?

With so many exciting, innovative and highly anticipated new ships debuting over the next 18 months, it's hard to pinpoint a single 'hot spot'. Australian cruisers have never been in a better position. We are now spoiled for choice in terms of destinations, cruising styles and ships, with close to home cruises available on some of the biggest and best ships to ever sail in our waters. Internationally, there are so many exciting options thanks to a rapidly expanding river cruise scene and exciting new generation liners.

### What is the most important issue in the cruise industry today, and why?

Port space is a significant issue, particularly in Australia, and presents a serious threat to the future growth of the industry. To ensure that Australia continues to attract the best ships possible, it's important that the ports around the country are able to accommodate the size of these great new super liners.

### What is something you wish more agents or consumers knew about cruising?

Our consultants are well versed in cruising, with many years experience, so for us, it's about ensuring our customers and the wider travel population are aware of the diversity available in cruise holiday and that a cruise isn't just limited to the facilities onboard. You aren't just stuck on a ship, there are plenty of opportunities for passengers to get out and explore a new destination almost every day. I think the message to consumers is that there really is a cruise for any taste, budget & holiday style and that a consultant can match them to the right cruise for them.



## Jarrod's Cruise Favourites!

**Favourite Ship:** How can you choose just one?

**Favourite ship activity:** I don't mind a bit of karaoke.

**Favourite shore excursion:** City cycling tours to explore a new place from a different perspective.

**Favourite region:** South Pacific or Hawaii for the sun and surf.

**Favourite port:** Sydney - for the unparalleled harbour views.

**Favourite onboard food:** Mojito

**Cruise Weekly** is Australia's favourite online cruising publication. In production since 2007, **Cruise Weekly** is published each Tuesday, with a further travel industry update each Thursday.

**Cruise Weekly** is free and is sent to subscribers via email as an Adobe Acrobat PDF document.

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