

Legislative hurdle for cruise resumption

EXCLUSIVE

THE current human biosecurity emergency declaration is not the only barrier to a cruise restart in Australia, with the passing of a key bill in parliament also required, it has emerged.

Less than four weeks ago, federal Minister for Health Greg Hunt blindsided the sector (**CW** 09 Dec) by announcing a two-month extension of the emergency period until 17 Feb, but another government official has now confirmed lifting the ban is just the first of two key steps required to resume international cruises in Australia.

"The other is passage of the *Biosecurity Amendment (Enhanced Risk Management) Bill 2021*...the earliest opportunity for the Bill to be considered in the Senate will be in Feb," according to a letter from Hunt's office obtained by **Cruise Weekly**.

The senate is currently in recess until 08 Feb, when it is scheduled to sit for just three days, and if the bill is not passed at that time, the next opportunity will be the two-day budget sitting, scheduled for 29-30 Mar.

Further complicating the issue is the likelihood a federal election will be called, which must take place no later than 21 May - and it's presumed no legislation could pass during the caretaker period after it is announced.

The letter from the Department of Health states that until the bill is considered, "the Australian Government will continue to work with states and territories on the operational issues required for a cruise restart".

"State & territory jurisdictions have asked that the Communicable Diseases Network Australia (CDNA) Maritime Working group work with the cruise industry to ensure appropriate health

mitigations are implemented ahead of cruise restarting," the update said, noting the full opening of international borders is likely to resume at the final post-vaccination Phase D of the national plan to transition Australia's COVID-19 response.

"Until then the Government will review monthly whether a phased resumption of cruising may be possible...when the ban is lifted, cruises will start in two stages, Stage 1 - domestic cruises with passengers boarding in Australia, and Stage 2 - cruises arriving with international passengers on board," the letter from the Office of Health Protection and Response continues.

Among a range of measures, the proposed new bill (**CLICK HERE**) gives the Government the power to "manage large numbers of passengers and crew with potential Listed Human Diseases onboard foreign vessels".

Cruise Weekly today

Cruise Weekly today features two pages of all the latest cruise industry news.

Two cases aboard Coral Discoverer

PASSENGERS aboard Coral Expeditions' *Coral Discoverer* in Hobart are being held on board and tested for COVID-19 after two confirmed cases.

Premier of Tasmania Peter Gutwein said the two who tested positive have been removed from the vessel, while about 60 passengers and 30 crew members remain on board, as contact tracing continues over the next two days.

Coral has activated its COVID response plan to manage the flare-up and ensure no broader risk to the wider community.



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A PORTUGUESE man has scratched his itch for cruising (somewhat) - crossing the Atlantic Ocean using kites!

However, the man was not gliding above the ocean for the duration of his trip; instead, he was on board a small boat powered by the kites.

Harnessing only the wind and the sun, the man used mother nature to power everything, including the boat's lights and equipment.

The man arrived on the island of Martinique just before Christmas, and hopes his trip will earn him a Guinness World record for Fastest Solo Atlantic Crossing by Kite Boat.

He also hopes his trip will help people understand the need to protect the oceans.

Valencia investing

THE environment, innovation, accessibility and city-port relationship are all objectives of Valenciaport's investments for 2021-2025.

The funding, worth a total of €1.098 billion, will see €60 million go toward alternative energy projects such as the electrical substation, the location of photovoltaic plants in Valencia, and the installation of wind turbines.

Among other plans are €27.4 million for the passenger terminal, and €100 million for road & rail accessories.

Octantis to set sail



VIKING has taken delivery of its first expedition ship, *Viking Octantis*, which will debut this month.

The first of Viking's two new purpose-built expedition ships will explore Antarctica and the Great Lakes, with *Octantis'* delivery (pictured) taking place late last year at Fincantieri's VARD shipyard in Soviknes, Norway.

Octantis hosts 378 guests, and will embark on Viking's first voyages to Antarctica this month.

She will be officially named in Apr in New York City by her ceremonial godmother, educator Liv Arnesen.

Octantis will then makes her way to the Great Lakes, before her sister ship, *Viking Polaris*, joins the fleet in Aug, for journeys to the Arctic and Antarctica.

"Today is a proud day for the entire Viking family as we welcome our first expedition ship to the fleet and usher in a new era of exploration," said Chair Torstein Hagen.

"Our guests have asked us to build on our award-winning river and ocean voyages to take them further, and that is just what we

have done.

"Leveraging our long history of destination-focused travel, enrichment and innovative ship design, we are now perfecting expedition voyages and offering curious travellers the opportunity to visit some of the world's most pristine destinations in the most responsible way possible."

Ultramarine launch

QUARK Expeditions'

Ultramarine sailed on her inaugural cruise out of Ushuaia late last year.

The itinerary is an 18-night roundtrip voyage with visits to the Antarctic Peninsula, Elephant Island and South Georgia Island.

Ultramarine is set to return to Ushuaia on 10 Jan.

"We're thrilled to be back at sea," Quark proclaimed.

"After five years of intense ship-building and innovation – plus an interruption of expedition travel due to the pandemic – we're so excited for our guests.

"Not only are these adventurers the first to travel on this game-changing ship, but they also get to celebrate the life of Sir Ernest Shackleton".

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