



# Ponant set to return within weeks

**PONANT** looks likely to be the first international passenger cruise line to recommence operations in Australian waters following next month's lifting of the biosecurity emergency period, with its first vessel expected to begin operations out of Darwin on 28 Apr.

The cruise line's Chair Asia Pacific, Sarina Bratton, told **Cruise Weekly** Ponant had been working closely with the NT Government for some months now, and the directive which permits a maximum of 350 passengers and crew members (**CW** 17 Feb) allows Darwin to become the homeport for Ponant's Kimberley operations, as well as those of rival brand Silversea Cruises.

"The Federal Government's subsequent lifting of the biosecurity declaration on 17 Apr means the NT's initiative can proceed promptly," she said.



Bratton confirmed that Ponant's two small expedition ships, *Le Laperouse* (**pictured**) and *Le Soleal* had been laid up in Noumea for the last two years, waiting to return to their operating areas of Australia.

Because they are so close they can be deployed rapidly, with *Le Laperouse* planned to commence

operations out of Darwin on 28 Apr, followed a month later by *Le Soleal*.

Cruise lines continue to await approvals from the Government of WA, with Bratton saying once this is received, "Ponant alone will take around 4,000 Australians on expeditions to explore the wonders of our North West".

### Cruise Weekly today

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

### \$3m for Ukraine

**THE** Micky and Madeleine Arison Family Foundation, operated by Carnival Corp Chair Micky Arison and his family, has pledged USD\$3 million in donations to provide medical and humanitarian aid to Ukrainian refugees.

Beneficiary organisations, each receiving USD\$1m, include World Central Kitchen which provides fresh meals; Direct Relief which offers medical aid, medicines and supplies to people displaced by the invasion; and UNICEF USA, which works to reach vulnerable children.

The Carnival Cruise Line brand also made a USD\$50k gift to World Central Kitchen.

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## Pandaw deposit

**PANDAW'S** USD\$100 deposit offer has been extended for all new bookings until the end of next month.

Although many of Pandaw's itineraries are almost fully booked, the cruise line extended its deadline, as countries across Asia slowly open for tourists, and guests scramble to arrange suitable flight options - click [HERE](#).

## Cruise to return to Qld



**THE** Queensland Government has announced the return of cruising in the state from 17 Apr (**CW** breaking news Fri).

Premier Anastacia Palaszczuk (**pictured**) confirmed Queensland will soon finalise health protocols for the industry with the federal government, as well as the govts of NSW and Victoria.

"Rebuilding Queensland's tourism industry is central to our plan for economic recovery," Palaszczuk said.

Queensland's Minister for Tourism Stirling Hinchliffe said health protocols were still being finalised by federal and state governments, but were likely to include passengers and crew members being fully vaccinated; enhanced communication between cruise lines and passengers; and COVID-safe practices, including testing and mask-wearing before embarkation & disembarkation.

"The industry is one we want to see resume as soon as practicable but not at the expense of proper health requirements and

procedures," said Hinchliffe.

"The Palaszczuk Government has continued discussions with the cruise lines regarding resumption of services and it's reassuring that cruise ships have improved their ventilation systems and will follow enhanced cleaning practices onboard."

The Queensland Government also recently completed a \$127 million project to widen and deepen the shipping channel in Cairns, and is now delivering a \$232 million upgrade to the Port of Townsville – initiatives that will make the state an even more attractive destination for the cruise industry, Palaszczuk believes.

"With a brand new cruise terminal here in Brisbane, more ports than any other state and the best climate, there's no reason Queensland can't become the cruise capital of Australia in the near future," she added.

The industry now awaits other jurisdictions, which are expected to shortly announce their own plans for a resumption.

## Odell over the moon

**AHEAD** of their return to Australia later this year, both Oceania Cruises and Regent Seven Seas Cruises (RSSC) are delighted that the federal government is paving the way for the return to cruise in the country, according to the lines' Senior Vice President & Managing Director Steve Odell.

The cruise industry generates \$5 billion for the Australian economy each year, and both lines are eager to resume operations in the country to support its tourism industry and local economy.

RSSC's *Seven Seas Explorer* will sail her local maiden voyages in Dec, while Oceania's *Regatta* will return to Australia the same month.

Regent has completely sold out its inaugural season in Australia, which consists of five immersive itineraries aboard *Seven Seas Explorer*, departing Singapore on 12 Dec, and visiting ports including Java, Bali, Thursday Island, and more.

Meanwhile, Oceania's *Regatta* will return to the region at the end of this year for a series of nine destination-immersive sailings throughout Australia, as well as New Zealand and the South Pacific, from Dec to Mar.

The season will begin with a 14-day voyage from Sydney to Bali, departing 12 Dec.

"We know there is strong pent-up demand from Australian travellers looking forward to seeing our ships in local waters again later this year," Odell said.



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## Cruise to boost Qld's economy

**THE** Queensland Government's announcement that international cruise ships will be welcome next month (see **page two**) is fantastic news for Australia's hotel industry, the Accommodation Association has said.

The peak body thanked Queensland for the quick announcement, and encouraged other state governments to make a similar announcement of their own as soon as possible.

"The news that it's full steam ahead for a return to international cruise with Queensland now back on deck... is music to our ears," said Chief Executive Officer Richard Munro.

"The cruise industry is such a key driver for Australia's accommodation sector and all the additional businesses that support our sector.

"It drives billions of dollars each year into the Australian economy



and supports many thousands of jobs through our sector and the wider tourism and travel sector."

Carnival Australia's plans for its ships to make about 140 calls to Queensland ports is expected to deliver \$165 million to the state's economy, the company flagged.

Benefits will include guest and crew member spending, port fees, maritime logistics, shore tours, and suppliers of local goods

and produce, Carnival said.

"Like our guests, we can't wait to return to Queensland," added President Marguerite Fitzgerald.

"Not only do Queenslanders love to cruise, the state has a fantastic selection of ports that are among our domestic and international guests' favourite destinations, from Cairns (**pictured**) in the north to Moreton Island in the south."

## Katz hails travel fund

**THE** release of \$75.5 million in previously unallocated funds under the COVID-19 Consumer Travel Support Program is a much-needed boost for the travel and cruise sector, Cruise Lines International Association Managing Director Australasia Joel Katz said.

"Support for travel agents and other travel industry professionals is critical right now as we work to achieve a recovery in Australia's travel sector," Katz said.

"This latest initiative will provide welcome benefit to thousands of Australian businesses and individuals – many of whom will play a vital role in reviving Australia's cruise economy and bringing back billions of dollars in economic opportunities for communities around Australia's coasts."

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**CRUISE** lines should ready themselves for some big names on board - at least according to predictions by Queensland Premier Anastacia Palaszczuk.

Speaking on Fri at the new Brisbane International Cruise Terminal to announce the momentous return of cruise to the state (see [page two](#)), Palaszczuk was asked somewhat curiously by one of the media representatives present: "do you think we will see any big celebrities on board cruise ships in the coming months?"

She handled the question with aplomb, answering "I'm sure we will," but was then pressed further by the journalist for suggestions as to which particular stars might be taking to the high seas.

"Well, George Clooney and Julia Roberts have both been in Queensland recently, so maybe they will take a cruise," Palaszczuk added.

The Queensland Premier also suggested some closer-to-home big names might want to get on board, saying "my parents are very excited to be able to go cruising again".



## That's peak Seabourn!



**AMERICAN** mountain climber Alison Levine (**pictured**) has been named the godmother of Seabourn Cruise Line's new *Seabourn Venture*.

Levine will preside over the naming ceremony of the cruise line's first of two expedition vessels to join its fleet, set to launch in Jul.

She has previously shared her experiences, insights and tales of adventure with the cruise line's guests through Seabourn Conversations, the brand's onboard enrichment program, when she joined *Seabourn Sojourn* in Dec 2019 - her first-ever cruise.

"With her extraordinary history of travel and adventure, familiarity with the most striking of destinations, and her deep roots in the expedition world, Alison is a perfect choice to send *Seabourn Venture* off to explore the most-remote corners of the globe," said President Josh Leibowitz.

"We are excited for Alison to take the mantle as godmother of

our first expedition vessel, and we're certain she will embrace her role with the same passion she brings to everything she does."

## Valiant launches

**VIRGIN** Voyages' second ship *Valiant Lady* has been launched by Richard Branson.

The ship kicked off launch celebrations on Fri at London Cruise Terminal, featuring an all-star line-up of artists including DJ Diplo.

Continuing the musical theme of the launch, Virgin teamed up with local radio station Capital to give away an all-inclusive one-night luxury stay aboard *Valiant*.

Virgin Voyages Chief Executive Officer Tom McAlpin said the cruise line is seeing an uptick in bookings.

"The lifting of UK travel restrictions has already shown promising signs with 70% uplift in bookings".

## Did you know?

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