

ABOUT AUSTRALIAN CRUISE ASSOCIATION

Australian Cruise Association (previously Cruise Down Under) is a membership based, non-profit association, dedicated to marketing Australia and the South Pacific region as a destination for cruise ships.

In 1993 a small group of Australian and New Zealand ports and tourism organisations who had previously marketed their destinations separately to cruise companies, came together with the aim of having a single marketing presence at the annual Seatrade Cruise Shipping Convention in Miami, and promote the region under a single banner.

In the early years, the cruise brand 'Cruising Down Under' obtained funding assistance from the Australian Tourist Commission (ATC), with the support of the Office of National Tourism (ONT). ATC also provided the Cruise Down Under Secretariat until 1997.

In November 1997 at Seatrade Pacific, the member ports and tourism organisations agreed to form a not-for-profit incorporated association to enable Cruising Down Under to continue to develop relationships with cruise lines.

In May 1998 the interim executive comprising of Mike Bartlett (Cairns Port Authority) as Chairman, Chris Drinkwater (Hobart Port) as Deputy Chairman and Glenn Stephens (Fremantle Ports) as Treasurer, was elected as the Management Committee.

Cruise Down Under (CDU) was incorporated in Queensland in July 1998 with its own secretariat. Mike Bartlett was engaged to undertake the role of Secretary after retiring from Cairns Port Authority.

In the first 10 years, Cruise Down Under cemented its position as the peak marketing body for cruise tourism in this region. Through the association with CDU, members had access to a professional body which has made significant advances in providing quality information and cruise marketing collateral through its website and participation at the annual Cruise Shipping Miami Convention.

As a maturing association, the Management Committee decided in 2005 that it was obliged to embark on a formal process to appoint an executive officer (front desk position) and as such, called for expressions of interest for a General Manager to deliver the Association's administration and marketing activities. The selection process resulted in Jill Abel from Abel Event Management & Promotion being appointed as Cruise Down Under's General Manager and the registered office of CDU was relocated from Queensland to Tasmania.

It was at this time that Mike Bartlett from Cruise Australian Waters bid CDU goodbye as he opted for semi- retirement. Mike will always be remembered for his dedication to cruise shipping and in particular the tireless work he undertook in the formative years of Cruise Down Under and as such was awarded Life Membership in 2007. Richard Doyle took on the role of Chairman, through to 2010.

Evda Marangos was elected Chairman in May 2010. The succession plan was implemented with the election of Chris White as Chairman at the AGM in August 2010. Evda Marangos' term expired at the end of 2012 and the organisation recognised her tireless efforts over many years, including being integral to the development of sound governance, annual operating plans and the annual report.

Glenn Stephens was recognised at the 2013 Conference when he stood down from the CDU Management Committee. Glenn had been involved with CDU since its inception and held the position of Treasurer for the entirety of his terms. Glenn's commitment to the organisation has been integral to the success of CDU and, as such, he was duly awarded Life Membership.

Following the 2013 election, the new management committee, led by David Brown, identified that the incoming committee did not fulfill the skills set identified for the position of Chairman. Chris White was invited to take on the role of Chairman for one year through to the 2014 election. At the 2014 AGM in Perth, the association appointed Stephen Bradford as Independent Chairman of CDU for a two year period.

Leah Clarke stood down from the committee in 2015 after serving her maximum six year term. Leah was a major contributor to the communications sub-committee and drove the communications strategy and resulting in the engagement of our communications consultants, Barking Owl Communications.

At the 2015 conference in Darwin a proposal was put to the membership during a members' only workshop, to consider changing the name from Cruise Down Under to Australian Cruise Association. The new name was put forward and unanimously supported as a more appropriate descriptor of the entity, with a subsequent rise in recognition and profile of the Association and strength in membership growth. Australian Cruise Association was formally adopted as the new entity name at the 2016 AGM.

The Association celebrated its 20th Anniversary conference in Sydney in 2016 with a superb conference that cemented the strength of the association and its members' commitment to the cruise industry in Australia. The significant event culminated in fireworks and a stunning dinner on the forecourt of the Sydney Opera House. Richard Doyle, Evda Marangos and Judy Wood were appointed life members.

In 2017 the AGM and conference moved to Mooloolaba and celebrated the impact of cruise on regional Australian destinations. Stephen Bradford stood down as Chairman, after guiding the association through a significant period in the associations history, including the unprecedented signing of an MoU with CLIA, creating a strong and unified approach to continuing growth of the cruise industry. Grant Gilfillan was appointed as Stephen's successor.

Tyler Wood retired after fulfilling his six year term and was replaced by business partner, Jay McKenzie, ensuring an ongoing link with Bob Wood Cruise Group.

Christine Cole from Tourism WA and Scott Lovett from Tourism NT joined the committee following the 2018 AGM in Broome.

At the 2019 AGM in Geelong, we farewelled Thor Elliott who had been the Association's treasurer for the past six years and had completed his full term. Matthew Carley from Port of Brisbane stepped into the role. Jay McKenzie retired and was replaced by Karlie Cavanagh from Inchcape Shipping Supplies and Natalie Godward became the nominated representative for Port Authority of NSW (Port Authority) as Grant Gilfillan became the second independent Chairman.

COVID-19 pandemic hit Australia and the entire world in 2020 and ACA held its first virtual AGM due to the cancellation of the Townsville conference. Whilst the AGM ran smoothly, the face to face contact of ACA members was definitely missed. Grant Gilfillan retired from his position as CEO of Port Authority and as Chairman of ACA. Philip Holliday took over the role of Chair, representing Port Authority and Natalie Godward moved to a sub-committee position. James Coughlan replaced Martin Bidgood representing Intercruises and Anthony Brent from Abercrombie and Kent replaced Karen Davies. Anne McVilly completed her six-year term with ACA and was recognised for her valuable contribution. Kristy Little from Tasports was elected.

Our 2021 AGM was again held virtually, after two attempts to hold the conference in Townsville (September and November). Matthew Carley held the position of Treasurer at ACA from September 2019 until May 2022 and was a major contributor in steadying the ship during the pandemic. Brendan Connell (Port of Brisbane) joined the committee whilst James Coughlan (Intercruises) took on the role of Treasurer.

In September of 2022, we finally managed to hold a very successful conference and AGM in Townsville. The event co-incided with the restart of cruise following the pandemic and provided the perfect platform to educate and energise. Shayne Murray (Cruise Broome) joined the committee, replacing Anthony Brent (Akorn) who had provided two years of global shore excursions insights.

The post pandemic restart of cruise in Australia was frenetic with record numbers of ships and cruise calls welcomed in 2023-24. The Conference and AGM was held in Wollongong that started conversations around the next phase of growth and infrastructure required to drive the growth. James Coughlan joined under Shorex Australia, Scott Lovett (Toursm NT) did not renominate and Andrew McKinnon (SATC) joined the committee.