



SEMAPHORE

Newsletter of the Maritime Law

Association of Australia and New Zealand



Australasian Cruise Sector Remains at Anchor

Cruise sector interests on both sides of the Tasman Sea are still awaiting clear direction from their governments as to when Australasia will once again host ocean cruise operations.

In a [statement](#) on November 8, Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA) Australasia managing director Australasia Joel Katz observed that over three million people had travelled worldwide since ocean cruise operations resumed last year.

However, he lamented that Australasia remained one of the only major cruise regions where governments had not yet progressed plans for resumption.

“Worldwide, more than 70% of CLIA cruise line ocean-going ships are back in operation and we expect that figure to reach 80% in December,” stated Mr Katz.

“This is a remarkable achievement and it shows the effectiveness of the cruise industry’s new health protocols introduced in response to the global pandemic.

“Although we’ve made enormous progress in other countries, in Australia and New Zealand international cruise operations are still suspended and tens of thousands of jobs are in doubt while we have no clear indication from governments on a path to revival.

As part of its “Ready, Set, Sail” campaign, the CLIA recently released a [video](#) on social media highlighting both the work cruise lines have undertaken in response to the pandemic and the industry’s readiness for a careful resumption in Australasia.

In August the organisation outlined a four-phase pathway for resumption of ocean cruise operations in Australia, designed to align with the Australian Government’s four-phase “[National Plan to transition Australia’s National COVID-19 Response](#)”.

“This is about having plans agreed in advance so that we’re ready as conditions improve with the rising vaccination rate,” Mr Katz said at that time.

“Our governments have created a four-phase plan to reopen Australia and we’re now calling for our own four-phase pathway to be included in this process.”

Key goals in the Australian cruise industry’s pathway are set against each of the four phases in the National Plan and are said to be adjustable to respond to evolving circumstances.

These include:

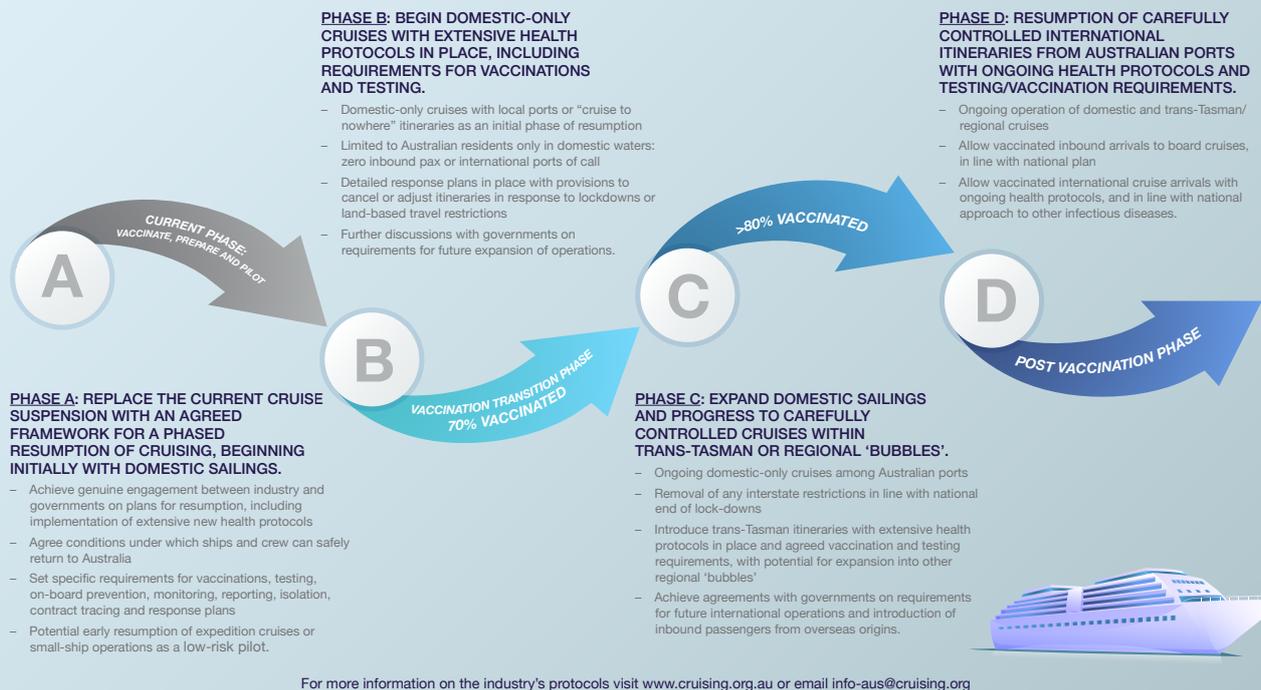
- current phase (vaccinate, prepare and pilot) – agreement between governments and the cruise industry on a framework for cruising’s resumption and the implementation of the industry’s layered health protocols including testing and vaccination, with potential to pilot small domestic expedition cruises as health conditions allow
- vaccination transition phase (~70% of adult population vaccinated) – resume limited domestic-only cruises within an Australian bubble, in line with the industry’s extensive health protocols

- consolidation phase (≥80% of adult population vaccinated) – achieve more extensive domestic sailings and begin carefully controlled trans-Tasman itineraries and other regional “bubble” sailings when conditions allow, with ongoing health protocols in place
- post-vaccination phase – resume carefully-controlled international itineraries from Australian ports with ongoing health protocols in place

Cruise Industry Alignment With Australia's National COVID Transition Plan



The international cruise industry has proposed a four-phase pathway to a careful resumption of cruising in Australia, designed to align with government plans to revive tourism and reopen borders. The following steps correspond to the four phases of the National Plan to transition Australia's National COVID-19 Response, each triggered by government vaccination targets.



As this edition of *Semaphore* was about to publish, Australia Minister for Health and Aged Care Greg Hunt announced an extension of the human biosecurity emergency period until February 17, which also extended the ban on foreign-flagged cruise ships.

New Zealand Cruise Association (NZCA) chief executive Kevin O’Sullivan confirmed the CLIA continued to work with Australian state and federal governments to implement the plan.

“There are many details for all parties to work through on a state by state basis as well as the overarching federal requirements,” he told *Semaphore*.

“It is a slow process but will provide good guidance for New Zealand Government agencies towards a resumption of cruise here.”

While predicting international cruise shipping would likely return to New Zealand “in a meaningful way” by October next year, Mr O’Sullivan also lamented the apparent lack of Government consideration of the sector’s interests on this side of the Tasman.

“Any structured plan that Government may or may not have has not included cruise so far as I am aware.”

Despite COVID-19 containment measures having had a major impact on the sector to date, Mr O'Sullivan remained upbeat on the industry's prospects locally once a resumption of ocean sailings was permitted.

"Cruise lines have booked port calls for the 2022-2023 season – July 2022 to June 2023 – more than 1000 bookings.

"Source markets continue to be very strong and we expect that cruise passengers will be very keen to return, as they have been elsewhere.

"NZCA will be working with regions before cruise returns to engage with communities. Some operators have moved on and may no longer be able to provide the range of activities we once enjoyed. Others though are very keen for the return of international visitors including cruise passengers."

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