



## Media Release

For Immediate Release

### **Western Australian Tourism Minister to open 2025 Australian Cruise Association Conference**

*New program updates, with only 1 week to go!*

The Australian Cruise Association (ACA) today confirmed that the Hon. Reece Whitby MLA, Western Australia's Minister for Tourism and the Great Southern, will officially open the 2025 ACA Conference in Fremantle, Western Australia, from 3–5 September.

Minister Whitby will address delegates at the Welcome Function, to be held at the iconic Gage Roads Freo on Wednesday 3 September. In a fitting and spectacular moment, Scenic's ultra-luxury discovery yacht *Scenic Eclipse II* will pass by the venue as the sun sets on Fremantle Harbour, marking its inaugural visit to the port.

"This is a significant moment for ACA and for Fremantle," said Jill Abel, CEO of the Australian Cruise Association. "Minister Whitby's presence, along with *Scenic Eclipse II* sailing past the function, sets the tone for a conference focused on innovation, regional opportunity, and industry collaboration."

Minister Whitby added, "It's a privilege to open the 2025 Australian Cruise Association Conference here in Fremantle."

"WA's cruise industry generated \$385 million in economic impact in 2023-24 and supported more than 1,200 local jobs, making it a vital contributor to Western Australia's tourism sector."

"I look forward to this event building on that success, strengthening industry partnerships, and highlighting the vital role cruise plays in driving regional tourism." Jenny Archibald, Deputy Mayor of Fremantle, will also be in attendance at the Welcome Function, alongside a host of cruise and tourism sector dignitaries.

Adding to the local flavour of the event, the Mayor of Fremantle, Hannah Fitzhardinge, will join delegates at the Friday morning conference breakfast. Guests will hear from

**Commented [HB1]:** I don't think these need to be mentioned as he's only attending in his capacity as Tourism, and the Great Southern is a good tie in due to Albany as a cruise destination

Stu McLeod, CEO of the Fremantle Foundation and guitarist for ARIA award-winning band Eskimo Joe, as he shares reflections on the city's creative spirit and community impact.

The 2025 Conference marks ACA's return to Fremantle for the first time in two decades, bringing together over 150 delegates representing ports, tourism organisations, cruise lines, shore excursion operators, and government stakeholders. Themed *Anchoring Success Across Every Region*, the conference program explores how Australia can strengthen its position in the global cruise market through sustainable growth and regional dispersal.

**Key panels and presentations include:**

- **State of the Australian Cruise Industry and Future Outlook**  
Gavin Smith (Royal Caribbean Group), Peter Little (Carnival Corporation), Ben Angell (Norwegian Cruise Line), and Jill Abel (ACA), moderated by Scott Lovett (BDO)
- **Keynote – Emerging Tourism Trends**  
Sally Cope, Tourism Australia
- **Keynote – How Princess Can Turn the Tide in Australia**  
Matthew Rutherford, Princess Cruises
- **Panel – Decoding Deployment**  
Robert de Bruin (Holland America Line), Debbie Holbrook (Princess Cruises), Tim Jones (Celebrity Cruises), and Michael Braathen (Mystic Cruises), moderated by Jill Abel (ACA)
- **Keynote + Panel – Redesigning Shorex for Different Generations / Unpacking Shorex and Pre/Post Opportunities**  
Christine Manjencic (Norwegian Cruise Line Holdings), Jack Sherrell (Two Feet and a Heartbeat), Tas Webber (Brisbane EDA), and Mladen Vukic (APT), moderated by Jacqui Lloyd (New Zealand Cruise Association)
- **Panel – Setting Up Ports for the Next Decade of Cruise**  
Brendan Connell (Port of Brisbane), Mike Drake (Carnival Cruise Line), John McKenna (Port Authority NSW), and Luke Westlake (Kimberley Ports Authority), moderated by Prof. Ross Dowling (Freelance Cruise Lecturer)
- **Panel – The Rise of Expedition and Ultra-Luxury Cruising**  
Deb Corbett (Ponant), Adam Radwanski (Silversea), Jeff Gillies (Coral Expeditions), Renata Lowe (Tourism WA), and Steve Biviano (Select Fresh Providores), moderated by Jason Gelineau (JAG Hospitality)
- **Panel – Reflections and Regional Resilience**  
Jacqui Lloyd (NZ Cruise Association), Sandy Olsen (Carnival Corporation), Josh Dolgoy (Royal Caribbean Group), and Adela Issachar Aru (Vanuatu Tourism), moderated by Joel Katz (CLIA)

"This year's program is our most ambitious yet - bringing global insights, operational expertise, and regional innovation into one place," said Abel. "Fremantle is the perfect setting to ignite the next phase of growth in the Australian cruise industry."

The conference is proudly supported by Tourism Western Australia, Business Events Perth, and the City of Fremantle.

**Register to attend**

<https://auscruiseassoc.eventsair.com/27th-annual-conference/registration>

**About Australian Cruise Association:**

ACA is the cooperative marketing body for cruise tourism in the Australia-Pacific region, representing ports, tourism agencies, inbound operators, and cruise facilitators committed to promoting the region as a leading cruise destination.

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