



**PRESS RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> April 2010**

**AFTA CONGRATULATES QANTAS AND OTHER  
AIRLINES IN THE FACE OF THE ICELANDIC  
VOLCANIC ERUPTIONS.**

The Australian Federation of Travel Agents has congratulated Qantas and other carriers who are responsible for carrying Australians and other visitors from Australia to Europe in the face of the unprecedented events resulting from the Icelandic volcanic eruptions.

The circumstances that have literally brought the airline industry to a standstill in Europe are unprecedented. Fortunately for the airline and travel industry, crisis management has become a part of “mode of operation”. The travel industry has faced many challenges over the past decade and this latest natural disaster has presented an entire new set of challenges. Consumers all around Australia have needed to have access to the latest information and options. Qantas and other airlines have done very well in informing the travel industry and their customers of what options are available to them.

“These are unprecedented times and the travel industry has welcomed how efficiently and quickly Qantas and other airlines have responded to the crisis” said Mike Thompson, Chairman of AFTA. “The industry has been able to respond to the hundreds of calls from consumers wanting to know what their options are and Qantas and the other airlines have all been willing to provide a range of flexible and reasonable alternatives for consumers to consider” he said

“At the end of the day of course all everyone wants is the ability to get to the destination they had planned to go, but when a natural disaster of this magnitude occurs and that is not an option, it is very welcomed that airlines have offered refunds and other waivers in order to accommodate consumers”. Thompson said.

The travel agents of Australia have demonstrated their value in times of crisis and they should also be congratulated for being at the front line to help as much as possible with the consumer enquiries.

“It is difficult to give a customer specific advice about what they should choose to do, but at least with the excellent communications to the travel industry by Qantas and

other airlines, travel agents have been equipped to explain the available options to customers” said Jayson Westbury AFTA Chief Executive. “It is times like these when the motto of AFTA “without a travel agent you are on your own” rings true with so many consumers said Westbury

The travel and airline industry should be proud of how this continuing crisis is being managed. This is nobody’s fault and good information is the key to keeping everyone calm at a time like this.

Reports indicate that the ash cloud is lifting with some airlines being able to fly into southern Europe. It is hoped that normal operations may resume by Friday of this week.

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