



FLIGHT CENTRE TRAVEL GROUP TO JOIN

NEW INDUSTRY ACCREDITATION SCHEME

THE Flight Centre Travel Group (FLT) today committed to joining the voluntary AFTA Travel Accreditation Scheme (ATAS).

FLT managing director Graham Turner said ATAS, which would operate from July 1 2014, would remove the unfair financial and administrative burdens that Australian travel agents traditionally faced.

“We believe ATAS is a superior option to the old Travel Compensation Fund (TCF) and congratulate AFTA and the government for the progress that has been made towards developing and implementing this new system,” Mr Turner said.

“The reality is that the TCF placed an unfair financial burden on Australian travel agents, who were required to pay substantial fees annually, but at the same time it exempted airlines and overseas operators.

“This created an unlevel playing field.

“TCF members were also forced to deal with significant administrative red tape and restrictions that, in FLT’s case, prevented the company from controlling its own balance sheet.

“This new system, which has been developed by the industry for the industry, addresses these issues and provides comfort to member agencies’ customers, as ATAS will use quality assessment criteria to assess participants.

“Key areas that will be assessed will include business disciplines, solvency, training and compliance.

“We look forward to signing on.”

Mr Turner said FLT supported AFTA’s view that supplier insolvency insurance should not be a compulsory part of ATAS.

“This would simply recreate the unlevel playing field that existed for Australian travel agents for so many years under the TCF,” he said.

“FLT has a strong balance sheet and a history of taking proactive steps to protect its customers in the event of supplier failure.

“Other agencies and chains can take similar steps to protect their customers.

“If they truly see value and a point of difference in insolvency insurance, they can also elect to take out policies at an individual or group level.

“We do not subscribe to any view that individual agencies should be forced down that path.”

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