

## **The role of travel agents has changed... and they are more relevant than ever**

SureSave, the leading provider of travel assistance and insurance in the agency channel, has released its latest findings from the 2017 Travel Insurance Index\*. Conducted annually over the past six years, the research monitors Australian travellers' views on booking travel, insurance and the role of travel agents.

Ross McDonald, General Manager – Distribution at SureSave, commented on the research,

“Our annual research uncovers compelling insights into travellers' behaviours and their perceptions. Since we began our research, we've seen some interesting changes regarding how people perceive travel agents. It seems that, despite travellers now having multiple online options for purchasing both travel and travel insurance, Australians increasingly see travel agents as their trusted source of travel and safety advice.”

### **Travel agencies hold their own against online booking sites**

In 2017, 40% of Australians booked their last overseas leisure trip with a travel agent (either in-store, over the phone or via email). Currently, this secures the travel agent's position as the second most popular method of booking travel in Australia, narrowly missing the top spot by only 2%, with 42% of Australians choosing to book their holiday online, using one or multiple booking sites, such as Webjet or Expedia.

### **Travel agents are more trusted now than ever before**

The findings also reveal that travellers' views towards agents are evolving, with 74% of Australian travellers now viewing agents as a 'trusted source of travel and safety advice'. This figure has increased from only 57% in 2012.

“Travellers are still turning to agents for their travel booking and insurance needs, but not because they view agents as the default booking option. They're coming back to agents time and time again as they genuinely seek and value the level of knowledge and expertise that agents offer,” added McDonald.

### **Travel agents contribute to Aussie travellers' improved travel insurance habits**

As a nation, we are becoming more educated about the importance of travel insurance, with 74% of travellers in Australia now viewing travel insurance as a 'necessity', stating they 'wouldn't leave the country without it'. This figure is an 11% increase, when compared to SureSave's findings in 2012, which revealed that only 63% viewed travel insurance as necessity.

In fact, 88% of 2017 respondents said they purchased travel insurance for their most recent international leisure trip. Of these, 27% sourced their travel insurance policy from a travel

agency (either in person, via email, online or over the phone). 'Travel Agency' was the most popular choice, along with purchasing 'directly from an insurance company'.

Travellers are also becoming increasingly savvy about the intricacies of travel insurance, and in particular the 'window of risk', which identifies the earliest point at which a traveller is at risk of being out of pocket. In 2017, 53% of respondents purchased travel insurance 'at the same time as booking their holiday', in comparison to only 37% in 2012.

"We can attribute this marked improvement in part to the efforts of agents to educate their customers. Of the respondents who booked travel plans through an agent, 86% revealed that their agent had explained the benefits of purchasing travel insurance at the same time as booking their travel plans," explained McDonald.

"In terms of ensuring that travellers are informed and well-prepared in advance of their holiday, the role of the agent is crucial and is becoming more important each year. We're passionate about ensuring that agents are well-equipped with the right information and tools so their customers are able to choose the travel insurance policy that's right for them."

\*SureSave's 2017 Travel Insurance Index is the company's sixth consecutive annual independent research project. The SureSave Travel Insurance Index is an annual, independently commissioned piece of research, involving 1,000 respondents in Australia.

For more information on SureSave, please visit <https://www.suresave.com.au/>.

## **ENDS**

### **Notes to Editors:**

SureSave is a leading travel insurance provider that offers 'help that's designed for travellers'. SureSave provides World Assistance through its agent support team, claims and in-house 24/7 Emergency Assistance operation, 'WE Assist'.

SureSave covers more than 300,000 travellers each year in Australia, is Australian owned and is a coverholder at Lloyd's.

Now in its sixth year, the SureSave Travel Insurance Index is annual research conducted independently by SureSave to uncover trends in travel and travel insurance purchasing habits.

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