

# Cairns Post

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HD **Webjet sees hotels as its future flight path**  
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THE overseas travel market may be a little tighter than usual, but that doesn't mean Aussies have stopped taking holidays, according to Webjet boss John Guscic.

The managing director of the online travel booking **site** says that despite all the economic doom and gloom we're actually taking more frequent — if shorter — holidays.

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"If you were counter-intuitive you'd suggest maybe the bad news is the stimulus Australians need to have for a holiday," the online travel booking **company**'s managing director said.

But Mr Guscic can't deny a more frugal consumer needs a bit of prodding to fork out for a discretionary spend such as a holiday.

Mr Guscic said Australians are taking shorter, more frequent holidays and, while the growth in overseas trips had tapered off, this sector was still growing.

He said the ASX-listed Webjet was making headway in its efforts to derive more revenue from accommodation sales rather than the pure flight bookings model.

To tick that box Webjet looked overseas, forking out \$23 million for Singapore and **Hong Kong**-focused **hotel** booking **firm** Zuji in March last year, then a \$1.5 million initial investment in Lots of Hotels, a start-up venture in the Middle East.

When Australians do pack their bags, it's invariably for shorter trips, Mr Guscic says.

"We're seeing more people take shorter breaks but more frequently." Figures released this week from the Australian Bureau of Statistics backed up the trend. April's short-term resident departures, defined as trips of less than a year, were up 10 per cent seasonally adjusted on a month earlier to 789,000.

Getting those travellers to upsize their **transaction** with Webjet is Mr Guscic's end game.

"We want to improve the level of conversion of our existing visitation to bookings — we want to make that an easier process for consumers to go down," he said. The **group** has launched Webjet Exclusives, discounted inventory available only to its customers, while it also sells packaged accommodation and flight deals into Virgin Australia Holidays, the airline's holiday partner.

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