

TOURISM RESTART TASKFORCE

Key Issues Meeting #2, 8 May 2020



Presentation from Tourism Australia

The Taskforce was joined by the Managing Director of Tourism Australia, Philippa Harrison who provided a briefing on consumer travel sentiment in key markets. Ms Harrison also canvassed the proposed roll out of advertising to the domestic market to encourage Australians to plan their next holiday. She noted that TA was maintaining a presence in social media in international markets to reinforce consumer desirability to come when restrictions are lifted. Overall, TA are focusing at this stage of the campaign on dreaming and planning.

The Taskforce discussed what the industry could look like post-Crisis and undertook to feed further input to TA to help align with their own strategies. If past crises are any guide, the domestic market could come back quickly. The challenge this time is whether the consumer has money to spend and whether they have the confidence. Travel Insurance will be an important issue in providing confidence, as will the combined and consistent messages from industry, government and health officials that travelling is safe.

\$1 Billion Relief and Recovery Fund

The Taskforce posed the question as to the status of the Recovery and Relief Fund that was announced in the Government's first tranche of support measures. It was noted that most recently the fund had been used to support Zoos and Aquariums, which was an issue that Aus Chamber Tourism had raised in previous advocacy as a priority for the Fund. Concern was expressed that the fund had shifted to being managed by the Infrastructure Portfolio which may lessen the support available for tourism.

Engagement with the National COVID Coordination Commission (NCCC)

It was noted that the Taskforce Chair had written to the Chair of the NCCC following the first meeting of the taskforce, highlighting the key issues:

- Importance of a staged plan for removing restrictions, not just a one step at a time process
- Concerns about the 4 sq m rule in that it challenged hospitality industry economic viability
- Encouragement to remove current closures of state borders
- The need to support industry protocols for reopening in a COVID safe way

The NCCC Chair was invited to meet with the Taskforce as soon as can be arranged.

Trans-Tasman "Bubble"

The Taskforce strongly supported the opportunity of opening up travel with New Zealand and noted the ACCI media statement that had been issued during the week. The Taskforce was also informed that ACCI had met with counterparts in Business New Zealand to discuss how this could be jointly encouraged not just between the countries, but in terms of inclusion of other neighbours where COVID was also assessed as well contained.

National Cabinet Announcements

The Taskforce was provided a summary of the announcements made earlier that day by the PM, including the proposed 3 stages on the road out. It was acknowledged as a positive that the announcements laid out a plan for opening in stages.

Concerns were expressed about the announced stages 1 and 2, given that they only allowed 10 (stage 1) and 20 (stage 2) customers in businesses. For most hospitality businesses this number would not make it economically viable to open. It was also noted that the 4 sq m rule still applied, which had already been raised as a barrier to economic viability for a restaurant and cafe business.

It was agreed that a media statement be released expressing these concerns and that further input needs to be provided to governments. Much of the decision making is in the hands of the State and Territory Governments which should be encouraged to work with industry to issue guidelines that promote economic viability while at the same time reducing the health risk. The Taskforce questioned what the health triggers were to proceed or not at the 3-week review.

It was noted that the Queensland Government on the same day issued its timetable for reopening and was more specific about dates and the distance that the public was allowed to travel. The expectation was stage 3 by 10th of July

Business Events and Defining a Group

One of the key issues that needed to be raised with all governments was that not every gathering should be considered the same. Business events, including conferences, exhibitions, meetings and incentive groups, were controlled activities where all delegates are registered. Exhibitions could operate like retail, with guidance on the floor and in the room to maintain social distance. This control did not readily apply to other mass gatherings including parties and major events where the attendee details are mostly not recorded. Reference was made to Stage 3 of the government announcements where gathering sizes would be limited to 100. This was not viable for the business events sector.

Protocols and COVID Safe Guidelines

The Taskforce acknowledged the increased preparedness of tourism sectors with protocols and skills development taking place to ensure a safe restart could take place. The Taskforce noted the guidelines issued by Safe Work Australia as well as those being developed by Australian Chamber – Tourism to help guide tourism businesses using COVID Safe Tourism Guiding Principles.

Next Meeting was set for Friday, 15 May 2020 at 3 pm.

In attendance:

- Dr Jeremy Johnson AM (Chair) (Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry)
- The Hon. Bruce Baird AM (Business Events Sydney, TTF)
- Sarina Bratton AM (Ponant)
- Geoff Donaghy (BECA, ASM Global, ICC Sydney)
- Bob East (Tourism Australia)
- The Hon. Martin Ferguson AM (Tourist Accommodation Australia)
- Nikki Govan (Star of Greece)
- Denis Pierce (Australian Tourism Export Council)
- Graham (Skroo) Turner (Flight Centre)
- Jacqui Walshe (The Walshe Group)
- John Hart (Australian Chamber – Tourism)

Secretariat

- Jenny Lambert, Director – Tourism at ACCI
- Sophie Lebang, Policy Officer
- Jennifer Low, Policy Director WHS, ACCI

Observers

- Lyn Ashpole, Austrade
- Jarod Mandes, Tourism Australia