

TOURISM RESTART TASKFORCE

Key Issues Meeting #6, 5 Jun 2020



Meeting with Treasury on JobKeeper

The Taskforce was joined by the Principal Advisor, Fiscal group of the Treasury, Geoff Francis to discuss JobKeeper and its future in tourism. The core purpose of the measure was to provide cashflow relief, maintaining the employment relationship and to assist businesses who had been standing down staff as an alternative to them becoming unemployed. There was a recognition that it was not a medium to long term measure. The review of JobKeeper did not have a formal submission process but would include consultation with peak bodies such as ACCI. Given that review announcements will not be made until 23 July 2020, there needed to be compelling reasons to make changes as they would only apply for a couple of months. In relation to post-September, one of the challenges in considering targeting a particular industry was how the businesses would be defined. A fall in revenue is an easier way to determine eligibility. It was raised by the Taskforce that in terms of its current operation, one of the difficulties was how an existing employee on JobKeeper can be encouraged to do work as they receive the money regardless of whether they work or not.

The taskforce noted and supported the ACCI position on JobKeeper as addressed in its letter to the Treasurer as it embraced the suffering tourism businesses.

State and Territory Movement and Gathering Restrictions

The Taskforce noted the announcements during the week, including the shift away from the 4 sq m rule in WA. Taskforce noted once again the key priority is the removal of interstate domestic borders.

Key Priorities for Taskforce Action

Following the decision last week to focus on four key priorities, the Taskforce agreed that the outline for the restart plan would be:

1. Opening narrative – context – bushfire recovery, industry already impacted – first impacted, longest impacted, uncertainty. Introducing the priorities
2. Restart Timetable – including domestic and international travel recommencement through all its stages to fully open travel activity and the same for business events.
3. State Borders
4. Easing of restrictions
5. JobKeeper and other employment support (plus potentially other immediate stimulus measures)
6. Medium to Long term recovery priorities, eg. EMDG, Tax/FBT, reskilling, visa reform and insurance.

Proposed Tourism Restart Timetable

Following input from ACCI member, Live Performance Australia, the Taskforce agreed to update the timetable to bring forward the restart of ticketed events to September.

The Taskforce was provided an update on the progress of the hospitality restart proposal, including having been taken by the NCCC to the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC) – the critical senior health officials' group that feeds into the national cabinet. While not adopting the

proposal as yet, the feedback was positive in that it clearly set out the arguments and would be taken into consideration, and it was pleasing that some States had announced further relaxation of restrictions. Given the feedback on the format, the Taskforce reviewed drafts put forward in the same format that addressed the issues for the bus industry and the domestic cruise/expedition industry as well as a preliminary draft for business and ticketed events.

It was noted that as well as these documents being tabled in important national forums, it was vital that member organisations take them forward at the State Government level.

Australia/New Zealand/Pacific Travel Bubble

A report was provided on the public release of the proposal to put proof of concept flights on between Canberra and Wellington. It was noted that there were other proposals under consideration and also that the NZ PM had responded that given where Australia is up to in the management of COVID19, the 1st July proposal is too early to commit to at this stage. The main objective of releasing the proposal was to encourage governments to bring forward the restart of international travel between Australia and NZ so that the first flight recommenced no later than July. The Taskforce noted that internationally other travel “bubbles” were being considered (eg. Japan, Greece) and also discussed the positive announcements from QANTAS and Virgin about the planned increase in domestic flights.

Next Meeting was set for Friday, 19th of June with the review of the draft plan as the key focus.

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)
 - Jacqui Walshe (The Walshe Group)
 - John Hart (Australian Chamber – Tourism)
- Apology**
- Graham (Skroo) Turner (Flight Centre)
 - Lynne Ashpole, Austrade (observer)
- Secretariat**
- Jenny Lambert, Director – Tourism at ACCI
 - Sophie Lebang, Policy Officer
- Observers**
- Jarrod Mander, Tourism Australia
- Guests:**
- Principal Advisor, Fiscal group of the Treasury, Geoff Francis