

# **TOURISM RESTART TASKFORCE**

## **Key Issues Meeting #7, 19 Jun 2020**



### **Consumer Confidence**

The Taskforce reviewed the latest consumer survey figures issued by the ABS and others. There were positives in the surveys about the public's desire to undertake increased dining and domestic travel. However, the surveys also showed the extent to which the public relied on the advice of health authorities. There is a need for Governments and, in particular, health officials to be positive in their encouragement to undertake these activities so as to reassure the public. This was especially important as each State Tourism Authorities were launching major domestic tourism campaigns and tourism businesses and their workers desperately need consumers to respond.

### **JobKeeper**

The Taskforce supported the submission made by ACCI to the COVID Business Liaison Unit on the need for JobKeeper to be extended at least to 31 December for tourism businesses which in September would still be impacted by restrictions and for those businesses that were closed down by law during the crisis. Recent public comments made by the PM and Treasurer indicating JobKeeper may not be extended were cause for concern. It is accepted that any extension should be targeted, but if any industry was eligible for extension it should be those businesses operating in tourism and events. The recently announced Minimum Wage Case provided third party endorsement of the strong argument that tourism and hospitality industries are the hardest hit and will take longer to recover.

It was essential that the flexibility enabled by the FWA amendments be extended as return to work for tourism would be slower for many and not all employees will come back at once.

It was unfortunate that for many hospitality businesses, the return to work was being inhibited by some employees on JobKeeper who were finding excuses not to do the full number of hours that JobKeeper would have covered.

### **Proposed Tourism Restart Timetable**

The lack of certainty remained one of the major issues for tourism businesses. There needs to be a better understanding of the implications of what some may consider the reality of a second wave of the pandemic which may stretch out the impact of the crisis beyond two years particularly if there is no vaccine. The Government, who has already acknowledged that the goal is not eradication but suppression, is encouraged to make it clearer what the goals are for easing restrictions beyond the current 3 step timetable that finishes in July. There needs to be realistic expectations around health, and the unreasonableness of not shutting borders indefinitely.

The successful management of the crisis was acknowledged, and understanding was expressed about the community expectation. It has been a most difficult crisis to manage.

Concerns were expressed that at both national and state level there have been comments made by Governments and others that domestic or local travel can substitute economically for international visitation, particularly with Australians forced to holiday within their own country, or in the case of state border closures in their own state. The Taskforce noted that the travel activities were not a direct

substitution, as spending and travel habits differed. Spend on tourism could be lost to other spending or saving. In short, domestic tourism is not going to make up the revenue shortfall at either a state or national level.

### **Hospitality restart – 4 square metre rule**

The revised proposal to remove the 1 person per 4 sq m rule from all state and territory restrictions was accepted. This rule was seriously inhibiting restart, and severely and unnecessarily limiting employment. The revised proposal recommended that the 1.5 m distancing be the main requirement, or if authorities needed to rely on a per sqm measurement, then it should be 1 person per 2 sq m as per the WA rules. The NCCC was taking the proposal forward to all jurisdictions for consideration and it was important for the industry at all levels to advocate for a change.

### **Australia/New Zealand/Pacific Travel Bubble**

The continuing closure of the State Borders appeared to be inhibiting progress in having a commitment to the reopening of travel with NZ. Although there were target dates for lifting of state border restrictions (except WA), the NZ travel restarting should not be contingent on decisions of the State Government. Any border closure is a barrier to economic growth.

### **Tourism Restart Plan**

The Taskforce reviewed the first draft of the Tourism Restart Plan, which focused on the key priorities including the restart timetable, JobKeeper and State Borders. There will also be some reference to the key medium to long term priority issues that will help build a sustainable recovery for tourism. It was agreed that the Plan should be finalised in the next two weeks and should be addressed to the PM and other first Ministers, as well as all Tourism Ministers.

**Next Meeting** was set for Friday, 3 July 2020.

### **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)

### **Apology**

- Lynne Ashpole, Austrade (observer)

### **Secretariat**

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

### **Observers**

- Leigh Sorensen, Tourism Australia