

# TOURISM RESTART TASKFORCE

## Key Issues Meeting #8, 3 July 2020



### State of tourism businesses

The Taskforce reviewed the sobering statistics from the ABS showing that more payroll jobs were lost in accommodation and food services than any other industry. It was noted that not all of tourism is captured in that category, with others spread across industries such as arts and recreation and transport. Arts and recreation was the second most affected industry. The Federal Government had announced a support package for that sector, and the Taskforce should consider what support package would be appropriate for tourism beyond what was sought in the Tourism Restart Plan. Concern was expressed that the \$1 billion fund announced at the commencement of the virus was still not showing a strong spend in tourism.

### Tourism Restart Plan

The Taskforce noted that the Plan would be released first to the Weekend Australian and then to the media at large on Saturday 4 July 2020. Taskforce members were informed that the Plan was being sent on the same day as the meeting to the Prime Minister, the federal tourism minister, all First Ministers and Tourism Ministers from the State and Territory Governments, the National COVID Coordination Commission and the COVID Business Liaison Unit (CBLU). In relation to JobKeeper specifically, CBLU had expressed appreciation for the tourism business contacts provided by ACCI so that case studies of both the benefits and shortcomings of JobKeeper.

### Victorian Set Back

The Taskforce was joined by Paul Guerra the CEO of the Victorian Chamber of Commerce & Industry and Dianne Smith CEO of the Melbourne Chamber to discuss the recent rise in COVID cases in Melbourne and the halt on easing of restrictions on business. Paul expressed the frustration of tourism and hospitality businesses in Victoria who could not understand why a hybrid approach had not been taken where postcodes affected could be locked down, but other areas of Victoria could still have their restrictions eased. Their advice to Government was to not lock the state down but target the areas of concern. The restrictions hit Victoria hard as their tourism and hospitality industry relied heavily on events. Already State tourism had lost two lots of school holidays, and there was concern that the restrictions will not be eased sufficiently to maximise the benefit of the September holidays. VCCI was keen to see an overarching tourism strategy for the State to manage the long-term future of the sector.

### Proposed Tourism Restart Timetable

Notwithstanding the set back in Victoria, there was concern expressed that now that July (Step 3 in the national roadmap) had been reached that the job of business reopening was done and that Australia was "back to normal". In tourism, hospitality and events, Australia was **definitely not** back to normal both in terms of government restrictions as well as consumer confidence.

The Taskforce stated strongly that a start back for international travel should not just be accepted as July next year. The Restart timetable recommends the NZ/Pacific bubble should commence in July, other safe countries by September and international travel by 15 December. If these dates are not

accepted by Government, then it should be made clear what health conditions are required to get international travel restarted.

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

The Taskforce was pleased to acknowledge the shift in National Cabinet policy for small premises from 1 person per 4 sq m to 1 person per 2 sq m. The successful efforts in coordinating the industry voice and submitting a strong proposal through the NCCC were recognised. The Tourism Restart Plan and the hospitality dining proposal makes it clear, however, that distancing should preferably be enforced at 1.5 m between patrons, and failing that, then the 1 person per 2 sq m rule apply to premises of all sizes.

### **What's Next**

The forward agenda for the Taskforce should include:

- a further meeting with the Federal Tourism Minister,
- continuing to prosecute sensible reopening restrictions for business events and other sectors in tourism,
- engagement with health officials, and
- once JobKeeper review is announced on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of July, a meeting with the Treasury on its outcome and future impact on tourism businesses.

There was also a need to focus on corporate travel. The Tourism bodies had commenced advertising to encourage leisure travel, but a return in corporate travel was very important for airlines and accommodation. Business needed to be confident to recommence face to face appointments and small meetings.

**Next Meeting** was set for Friday, 17 July 2020 subject to the availability of the Federal Tourism Minister.

### **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)
- Nikki Govan (Star of Greece)
- Denis Pierce (Australian Tourism Export Council)
- Jacqui Walshe (The Walshe Group)
- John Hart (Australian Chamber – Tourism)

### **Apology**

- Bob East (Tourism Australia)
- The Hon. Martin Ferguson AM (Tourist Accommodation Australia)
- Graham (Skroo) Turner (Flight Centre)

### **Guests**

- Paul Guerra (CEO, Victorian Chamber)
- Dianne Smith (CEO, Melbourne Chamber)

### **Secretariat**

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

### **Observers**

- Leigh Sorensen, Tourism Australia