

TOURISM RESTART TASKFORCE



Key Issues Meeting #13, 19 October 2020

The Chair acknowledged the work of taskforce members in positive media coverage and engagement with the Prime Minister's Office. The Taskforce also spoke of the highly positive feedback of Tourism Australia's *Holiday at Home* campaign.

Summary of National and State Announcements

The Taskforce expressed concern about the situation in Victoria, referring to the 2-stage model for regional and metropolitan areas and acknowledged that the reopening of hospitality venues in Melbourne was still a fortnight away which was very disappointing.

Ramifications on business, especially with the limitations on ten people in a venue even when they were allowed to reopen were discussed. A cap of 10 is an unviable for most businesses to reopen unless the model is supported by JobKeeper and takeaway.

The Taskforce welcomed the recent announcements from NSW around increasing capacity of outdoor events and the number of attendees for weddings and corporate events.

The Taskforce acknowledged the higher likelihood of state borders reopening post the QLD election.

It was a continuing concern that the public was often being led to believe that tourism activity on weekends in the regions reflected a positive economic situation for tourism businesses overall, when regional businesses were likely to still only be busy on weekends and school holidays and capital city businesses were experiencing unprecedented low levels of business.

In the national timetable, and in the general discussion about reopening at State and Territory level, it is critically important to emphasise the steps for easing restrictions aim for "by December" rather than "by Christmas". Depressed trade in December due to restrictions, given that it often the busiest time for hospitality, will be highly detrimental.

State of Industry- Data Update

The Taskforce was joined by Rod Battye from Tourism Research Australia, who provided an overview of the latest data on both international and domestic tourism.

Domestic data regarding overnight visitation is showing a strong pattern emerging, with people increasingly visiting regional areas, and capital cities more than 70% down. Some of the regional numbers were positive compared to the previous year, but this was more true of States that were less reliant on interstate tourism. The Taskforce requested that TRA drill down into this data to ascertain the extent of evidence that shows that visitation is largely on weekends and school holidays and Rod agreed to refer to this in TRA's next public data update.

The data clearly showed with the closure of borders the profile of travellers has changed, with the usual duration of stay also shorter. Social distancing measures were also influencing the experience, with attractions, venues and tours being restricted in the numbers able to be accommodated. There was also a trend to free outdoor, nature-based activities.

Results of the industry survey undertaken by TRA forecasting tourism numbers should be available within the next month.

Tourism Restart Plan - Timetable and Guide

The Taskforce reviewed the proposed Tourism Taskforce Restart Timetable 2.0 in light of the current situation and considered the necessary pre-conditions to enable the safe reopening of businesses and borders. The guide written to further explain the stages outlined in the timetable was accepted as a valuable document and will be more widely circulated. Updates to the Timetable to reflect changes proposed for restart to domestic cruises as well as to incorporate the potential for private corporate quarantine were approved.

International Travel Restart

Commencement of travel from New Zealand was noted. The Taskforce also discussed some of the other countries that should be under consideration for a travel bubble or Safe Corridor with Australia, including Singapore, Japan, Fiji and South Korea. The recently announced Singapore to Hong Kong travel corridor will be closely monitored, with careful consideration given to the protocols in place. It was acknowledged that on the whole Asia is performing well in the management of COVID-19 which may enable safe passage.

Digital Passes are identified as an important part of international restart. The Taskforce acknowledged the Government's announcement of the Digital Passenger Declaration to digitise the incoming passenger card as a mechanism for and discussed some of the other digital options being considered by countries around the world, acknowledging the need to closely monitor these. A presentation of the GoPassport option will be finalised by ACCI for both the Taskforce and Tourism Committee members.

Tourism Budget Outcomes and Future Advocacy Priorities

The Taskforce noted the support measures largely announced prior to the budget and discussed the difficulties the international travel sector faced, with many only bringing in about 10% of income compared to this time last year. Further support will be needed and the industry should continue to reach out to Government to think about what will happen after JobKeeper finishes in March particularly if International Travel has still not restarted to any great extent. ATEC has undertaken a survey which indicates the dire straits that many tourism businesses are in. This evidence will be critical in future advocacy. The delays in restart were also impacting on the broader community, including indigenous Australians who in large parts of regional Australia receive revenue from tourism operations and permits to visit their lands.

Next Meeting was set for Friday, 20 November 2020 at 3 pm.

In attendance:

- Dr Jeremy Johnson AM (Chair) (Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry)
- 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)

Apologies

- The Hon. Bruce Baird AM (Business Events Sydney, TTF)

Secretariat

- Jenny Lambert, Director – Tourism at ACCI
- Jen Low, Director WHS, ACCI
- Victoria Matterson, ACCI
- Sophie Lebang, ACCI

Observers

- Margaret Bowen, DFAT
- Leigh Sorensen, TA

Guest

- Rod Battye, TRA