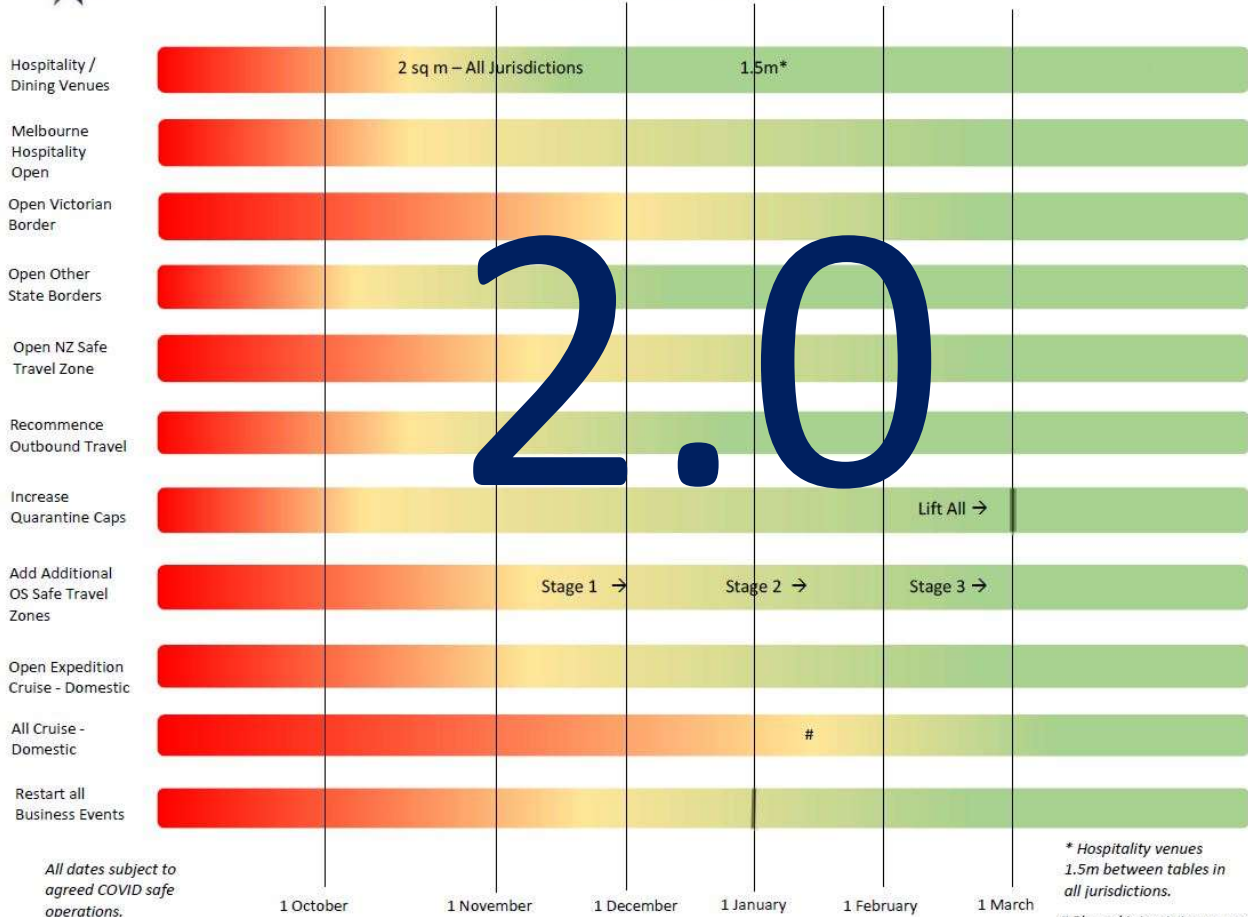


# Tourism Restart Timetable Guide



PROPOSED TOURISM RESTART TIMETABLE 2.0



October 2020



## Tourism Restart Timetable Guide

The travel, tourism and hospitality industry in Australia in 2019 employed over one million Australians. At the end of last year earnings from international tourism totalled \$45.4 Billion and domestic tourism \$80.7 Billion. This economic contribution was well on the way to reaching the high-bound target set for the Tourism 2020 strategy.

By December 2019, however, tourism was starting to see the negative impacts of a disastrous and tragic bushfire season with communities devastated. Tourism was seriously impeded, and Australia's image internationally negatively impacted by reporting of the bushfire activity. On the back of these challenging circumstances, tourism was the first to feel the impacts of COVID-19 with the Chinese Tourism travel ban in February followed closely by a more complete tourism shut down by border closures, business closures and all meetings and events cancelled by the COVID 19 response.

Whilst this health response was vital to control the spread of the COVID 19 virus, by April 2020, travel, tourism and hospitality in Australia was closed and these businesses had entered a hibernation phase when that was possible.

Government measures, such as cash flow support and Jobkeeper allowed most businesses to survive through this period. Tourism was starting to rebuild through June when the second wave of COVID19 hit in June. The response to the Victorian second wave demonstrated a level of fear over the health consequences that was disproportionate to the risk in all jurisdictions other than Victoria.

The Australian Chamber - Tourism believes that Governments have a duty to minimise both the direct COVID19 health impacts, as well as the economic and social (including mental health) impacts of response measures. The proposed timetable seeks to contribute to achieving this balance by presenting a pathway for the recovery of Australian tourism which is important to the National economy and the livelihoods of hundreds of thousands of Australians.

The Restart Timetable frames recovery in a range of tourism sectors. In each of these sectors the Australian Chamber - Tourism has provided COVIDSafe operating principles to Government, in conjunction with the relevant industry groups.

### Hospitality / Dining Venues

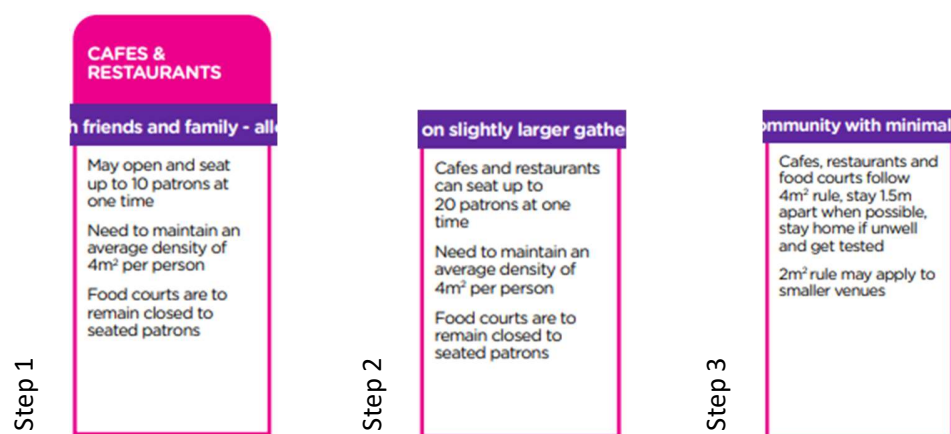


Figure 1: 3 Step Framework for a COVIDSafe Australia: Cafes & Restaurants

In the initial National Cabinet Roadmap the return to dining was provided for at Step 1 (Figure 1). This was achieved in most jurisdictions for very limited numbers. At the outset the limitation of the number of patrons to ten was not sufficient for many businesses to open. The progressive opening up of venues, based on gathering caps used as venue capacity caps was limiting on effective trading. Opening was only possible given support measures, particularly Jobkeeper.

As opening up of venues progressed, some jurisdictions maintained the one person per four square metre rule and others adopted higher or no density requirements. The persistence of the one person per four square metre rule contrasts with the progress made with active cases, tracing ability and health preparedness as well as the willingness of the industry to ensure COVIDSafe plans and control measures are used and maintained.

Although the National Cabinet at the end of June amended its requirement for smaller dining venues to one person per two square metres, the four square metre requirement, where it continues to exist, severely restricts the sustainable restart of businesses (to less than half of their capacity).

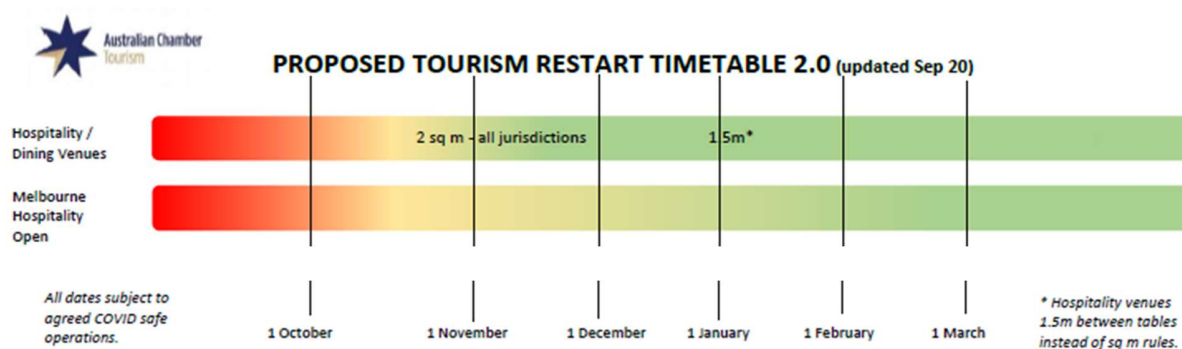


Figure 2: Proposed Tourism Restart Timetable 2.0: Hospitality

This Restart Timetable proposes that all States, other than Victoria, move to a limit of one person per two square metres, both indoors and outdoors in **October** with a further shift to only using the restriction of 1.5 m distancing by the end of the year.

Given Victoria's second wave has put their reopening back, the Timetable proposes that Melbourne hospitality venues should begin their reopening, on a risk proportionate basis, as early as possible in October 2020. It is hoped that the 1.5m distancing between tables should also be achievable in Victoria by early in 2021.

### State Border Restrictions

The highest priority for the Tourism Restart Taskforce, from its first meeting, was urging the opening of state borders and imposing instead targeted restrictions based on health risk. The Taskforce identified that the intra-state or travel-distance based restrictions that were included in the first tranche of restrictions to be lifted in step one of the National Cabinet's roadmap, were the important first step. It was stressed as part of the priority to open borders that this could only happen when it is safe to do so. The health advice to open borders was confirmed by the Commonwealth Deputy Chief Medical Officer in late May, however, some state health officials remain committed to border closures.

The State border restrictions are clearly the greatest handbrake on tourism restart. Despite the reemergence of intrastate tourism in June, at that time interstate tourism was 86% down on 2019 and intrastate visitation 25% down. This demonstrates the effect of State border closures on tourism activity.

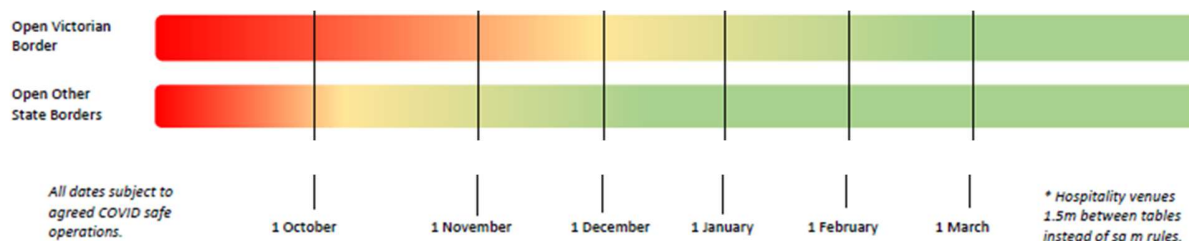


Figure 3: Proposed Tourism Restart Timetable 2.0: State Borders

The industry's proposed timetable envisages that all borders, other than Victoria, should be open in **October** and the Victorian border opening in **December 2020 on the basis of the current health trends**.

The reaction to the Victorian second wave of COVID19, including the closure of State borders, demonstrated the inconsistency in the actions between States / Territories and the bluntness of the State border measures. To ensure community and business confidence, the Australian Chamber - Tourism believes that Governments should commit to a consistent national approach to the management of outbreaks and the restrictions imposed in reaction to health risk.

This approach should involve a commitment by all Governments to act quickly and decisively and commit to a nimble, targeted and localised response rather than a one-size-fits-all response or the closure of a State border to control a local outbreak. The Chamber has also called for the actions of Government to be informed by clear health advice and published data and modelling.

The Australian Chamber - Tourism is promoting the use of a local visual model of a risk rating for geographical areas. The model is envisaged to colour code risk levels and link the level of risk to specific and transparent health indicators and resultant restriction levels.

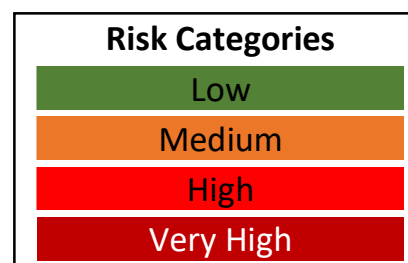


Figure 4: Proposed Risk Categories

In line with a proportionate risk response with layers of controls, there should be no restraints on the movement of people or goods and services within or between low and medium risk areas (other than in relation to physical distancing / gatherings and to allow the cleaning of places that have been identified as having been visited by a person who has tested positive). Medium risk for example might be defined whereby cases are present however they are quickly and easily identified, traced and quarantined.

## International Tourism Restart

Seven months into the COVID-19 crisis, with all the learnings as to how cases can be managed and with the health situation controlled in the majority of jurisdictions in Australia and many overseas countries, it is time there was greater certainty about the restart of international travel to and from this country.

The movement of people across our international border is critically important to trade, commerce, education, family connection and tourism. The ban on international travel has created both personal tragedy and economic hardship.

This document presents a staged plan for reopening. The key elements of any plan should be that:

- Through effective COVIDSafe management, risk is minimised to acceptable levels that can be addressed by available health resources and protocols in each entry location.
- The process to restart is risk-based and staged, so that each step is sufficiently evaluated and controlled.
- Australians are no longer prevented from travelling overseas.

It is intended that the Restart Plan use the language of risk from Low to Very high noted above for domestic movement restrictions and borders.

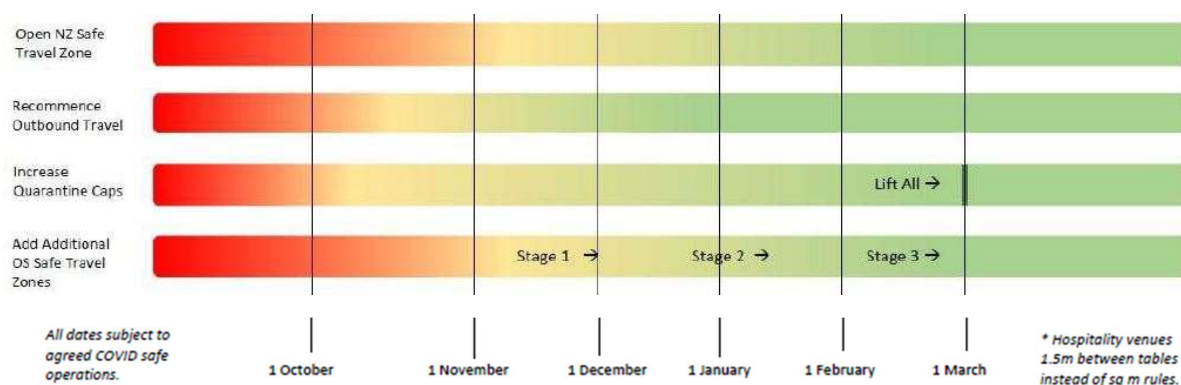


Figure 5: Proposed Tourism Restart Timetable 2.0: International Travel

## Quarantine Caps

The Restart Timetable envisages a staged lifting of quarantine caps from **October 2020** with all caps removed by **March 2021**. These caps are impacting both inbound and outbound policies and are having significant economic and social consequences. There needs to be a managed raising of the caps in line with risk and resources, and in accordance with this international restart plan.

In the process of easing caps on the October to March period, the plan envisages consideration of the following:

- Australian citizens returning from NZ and New Zealanders travelling here, provided they have not been in other higher risk countries or regions, should no longer be required to quarantine upon arrival in Australia. At least initially, jurisdictions may consider imposing a self-isolation requirement, but we recommend this is only an interim measure to build confidence.

- Subject to an appropriate testing regime, Australian citizens returning from countries could also be deemed 'low risk' (e.g. South Korea, Japan, some Pacific countries) and be allowed to 'self-isolate' at home or in private quarantine facilities rather than in hotel quarantine.
- Subject to an appropriate testing regime, that quarantine be reduced from 14 days to 7 days. Initially jurisdictions may consider this only for arrivals from source countries or regions that are considered low to medium risk, but again this is envisaged as an interim measure to build confidence.

## Outbound Travel

To the extent that it ever was, it is no longer justified to impose a ban on Australians travelling overseas, and the Biosecurity Act should be amended to remove the ban. The Restart Timetable recommends that the ban be lifted in **October**.

It is not a fair treatment of Australian citizens that they are prevented from leaving primarily on the basis that authorities are concerned about accommodating the numbers returning. This perversion of good policy is another reason why managing and increasing the caps is so important.

The plan is based on an outbound travel regime that includes the following principles:

- Anyone should be able leave Australia subject to any local restrictions around access to a port;
- All travelers should be required to be tested and return a negative result prior to boarding<sup>1</sup>;
- Ports should be closed to non-travelers to reduce the risk of contamination, and
- Ports should have strict separation between arrivals and departures, including for staff and services. Departing travelers may be asked to sign an acknowledgement that there may be delays and costs involved in them returning, depending on the risk status of the destinations visited. In order to manage the increase in caps, it could be considered at least initially that Australians who departed for business or family hardship/health reasons have priority for return over those that have left to undertake a leisure holiday.

## Safe Travel Zones

The Timetable demonstrates a phased reintroduction of international travel beyond the current highly restricted situation and without the need for quarantine needs to commence as soon as possible. COVID risk factors that need to be built into the policies include:

- Whether the travel is point to point versus tourists wishing to move around the country - Movement beyond the point of arrival may be restricted according to risk;
- Health status of the area of travel source – not necessarily based on a “by country” basis as different parts of a country may have different COVID risk status;
- Any transiting through a region of higher risk than country of origin, the traveller is treated as coming from a region of higher risk;

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<sup>1</sup> If the testing requires time to return a result, during the period of time it takes to return the negative result they need to be in a low risk area and not have contact with anyone from a high/very high risk area or a confirmed COVID positive individual.

*Note: a tracing app such as Accenture/Australia Post, ICC AOK Pass or GoPassport would assist.*

*Note: Rapid testing would mean this could be done on check-in.*

- Movement through airports, both landside and airside that separate passengers requiring to be quarantined from those that are not, and
- Reliability and availability of rapid testing which will have a material impact on operations.

The Restart Timetable envisages three stages. We had also envisaged a preliminary phase which could have involved a pilot opening between two or more locations to test the operational systems of non-quarantining passengers before more the opening stages below. However, the government has agreed to recommencement (Stage 1) of travel of New Zealand from mid October without travelers needing to quarantine which is in accordance with the proposed timetable.

The stages below are based on COVID Safe operations on aircraft. This means there should be no further limitations imposed on numbers of passengers per flight. Port limitations on movements should be capable of managing carrier-determined aircraft capacity.

In each stage travellers need to be tested as soon as possible prior to travelling and return a negative result. Testing arrangements should be finalised in a country to country bilateral discussion that would precede the opening of travel.

In **Stage 1 (Mid-October/November)**. Commencing with travel from NZ and then other low risk source regions. Travellers must declare that they have not been outside the locality defined as the low risk departure point/region in the 14 days prior to travel and do not have current symptoms. Contact information would need to be provided for the duration of stay in Australia and on movement in the 48 hours prior to testing<sup>2</sup>.

Quarantine would not be required, however, initially some jurisdictions may consider a requirement to self-isolate travelers from some source countries.

In **Stage 2 (before mid-January)** origin of travel would need to be at medium risk or below recognising an acceptable risk level whereby any outbreaks are still manageable by health authorities and can be adequately traced and cases isolated. Travellers would need to declare that they have not been in a high risk locality in the 14 days prior to travel and does not have current symptoms.

Quarantine would initially be required at the traveller's expense, subject to evidence, with regular review of need. Confidence in test results could see this shift to self-isolation.

**Stage 3 (by 1 March 2021)** envisages open access from Countries with high risk levels with quarantine required and negative tests returned as per current protocols.

## Cruise

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<sup>2</sup> Encourage the download of the COVIDSafe app for Australian travellers and require the download of the app for non-Australian travellers and also encourage the use of internationally recognised tracing apps such as the ICC AOKpass and GoPassport or local apps such as Accenture/Australia Post.



The Restart Timetable envisages the opening of Domestic Expedition Cruise and cruises in Australia and New Zealand in **November / December 2020** and a phased introduction of other intrastate cruise in January / February. There are a range of government restrictions that impact on the restart and operation of cruise services. This proposed timetable reflects industry recommendations on how expedition/domestic cruise businesses can reopen and operate in a COVIDSafe way.

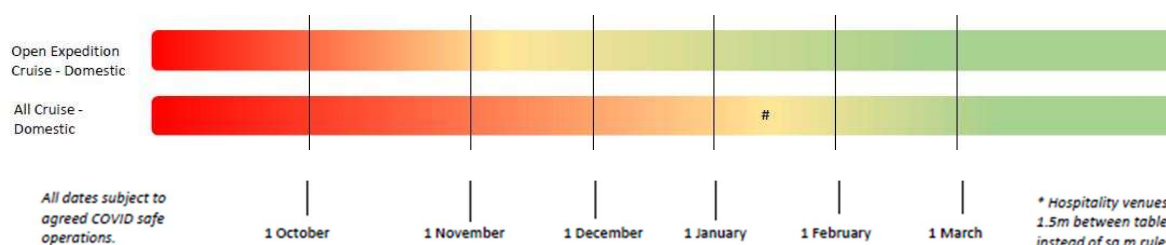


Figure 6: Proposed Tourism Restart Timetable 2.0: Cruise

The proposal aims to create a platform that these established domestic expedition cruise (such as those that normally operate in the Kimberley or Queensland coast) can commence for domestic operations irrespective of whether the vessel is Australian or foreign-owned and flagged.

## Business Events

It is well understood that the restart of Business Events is a vital component of the travel and tourism recovery in Australia. The Restart Timetable envisages the reopening of Business Events by **January 2021**.

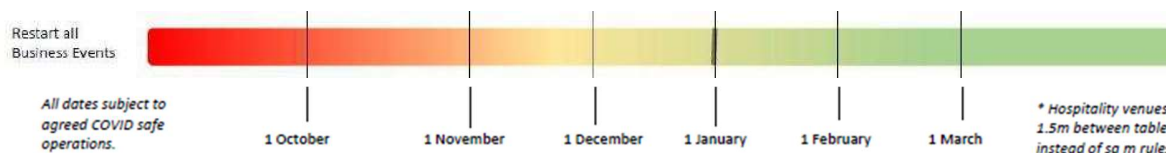


Figure 2: Proposed Tourism Restart Timetable 2.0: Business Events

The Business Event environment is very different to other events as the participants in Business Events are well know (and can be easily traced) the events are controlled and the facilities are managed through strict risk controls.

The Business Events restart, like dining and hospitality venues, need to operate with capacity limits higher than one person per four square metres. Other risk mitigations would reduce overall risk without the need for overly onerous density restrictions.