

TOURISM RESTART TASKFORCE

Key Issues Meeting #18, 7 May 2021



The Chair opened the meeting and acknowledged the contribution of the Hon. Martin Ferguson, who has left the Taskforce to head up a new Panel on reimagining the visitor economy. He welcomed new member, Michael Johnson, who fills the vacancy.

The Chair offered condolences on the passing of Bruce Baird's wife.

The Minutes from the last meeting were passed without amendment.

Summary of National and State Announcements

The Taskforce noted the measured response from NSW with the 2 new cases of community transmission.

Vaccine Rollout Summary

John Hart informed the Taskforce of a briefing provided from the Department of Health at the Tourism Committee meeting the previous week where they discussed the vaccine rollout. The Taskforce noted that 2.5 m doses have now been distributed and National Cabinet are reverting back to monthly meetings with rollout back on track.

Reimagining the Visitor Economy

John Hart provided a summary of the meeting in Adelaide on Wednesday. Another 4 sessions for rest of month are planned. Acknowledged the important role played in assembling real operators on the ground, through our networks, around 28 people there, covering the length and breadth of tourism.

Tourism Restart Activity Update

The Taskforce acknowledged the New Zealand travel bubble with Visiting Friends and Relatives (VFR) and business travel the key drivers at this stage, although increasingly Queenstown tour operators are reporting genuine leisure travel occurring.

The 2 cases of community transmission in NSW has led to a one-way prohibition at the moment with NSW residents prohibited from travel to New Zealand for 48 hours.

The Taskforce noted the Reopening Australia document with its 8 key principles. This document builds on the work of the Restart timetable, focusing on opening up to international markets.

It incorporates principles from the OECD blueprint for more seamless travel between countries, which countries would elect to opt in to. Risk mitigation would include vaccination, a classification of both source and destination countries and the vaccine rollout progress evaluated through a framework.

Guest Speaker Joanne Loundes, COVID Coordination, DFAT

Joanne gave a brief overview and acknowledged whilst international travel was some way off, it would have a phased approach. They are in the process of determining what this will look like and encompass, factoring in vaccine rollout and advice from AHPPC.

Joanne indicated states were in the process of putting forward submissions to bring international students back in. The Commonwealth Protocols have been updated on what the Federal Government expects to see.

Joanne asked how are the members of the chamber engaging with states and territories to encourage them to be more forward leaning?

The Taskforce discussed the blame game between the State and Federal Governments, with cruising a prime example of where industry gets stuck between governments and hearing different stories.

Protocols based on rates of vaccination were raised, recognising there will continue to be community transmission, noting Australia is far behind other developed countries with our vaccination rollout. The Taskforce observed that even with a lot of vaccination, it is unlikely that more than 50-60% of the population would be vaccinated in 12 months, so rules of engagement will need to change.

The Taskforce discussed how important the OECD and ICAO international frameworks would be in determining aspects including risk ratings and use of vaccine passports or certificates. Feedback from Qantas is expected next week on their experiences using the IATA Pass.

Joanne welcomed the opportunity to join future meetings of the taskforce.

Workforce Plan

The Taskforce discussed how labour and skills shortages are causing a major capacity constraint for industry. The Taskforce agreed the plan to address how these workforce shortages would be solved was needed. Segmentation of workforce was proposed as a start to address these supply issues.

Recognised there were 15,000 Working Holiday Makers who had secured their visas but then couldn't travel. There may be appetite there to still travel and withstand the quarantine pressures. The focus here would be on those from lower risk countries.

Tourism Australia are also looking at the opportunity to encourage Australians to do a Gap Year interstate.

Next Meeting

Next meeting scheduled for 2nd July.

In attendance:

- Dr Jeremy Johnson AM (Chair) (Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry)
- Geoff Donaghy (BECA, ASM Global, ICC Sydney)
- Bob East (Tourism Australia)
- Nikki Govan, (Star of Greece)
- Michael Johnson, (Tourism Accommodation Australia)
- Denis Pierce (Australian Tourism Export Council)
- Graham Turner (Flight Centre)
- Jacqui Walshe (The Walshe Group)
- John Hart (Australian Chamber – Tourism)

Secretariat

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

Observers

- Margaret Bowen (DFAT)
- Sally Cope, Tourism Australia
- Victoria Maigre, Tourism Australia