

TOURISM RESTART TASKFORCE

Key Issues Meeting #20, 18 August 2021



Summary of National and State Announcements

Given the dynamic nature of the Delta outbreak, the summary presented captured the latest on the varying restrictions and lockdowns imposed by the State and Territory Governments. Most of the restrictions, including the lockdowns seem set to be extended, except for the NT which might exit lockdown as indicated. The Taskforce noted that very few states were open, and with New Zealand also experiencing an outbreak, the situation is indeed bleak.

Tourism Business Support

The Taskforce noted that the industry has been the longest suffering and in the context of the current outbreak is not the drawing much local support from State and Territory Governments due to a combination of factors including that many of the businesses impacted are not in hotspot areas but have lost most key markets. There should be an acknowledgement that support needs to be targeted to those in need in the industry. The Taskforce also noted that tourism businesses are looking for support to keep staff on and talent within the sector. Further, it was considered that other support streams, such as those from the State Governments, were not accessible due to revenue thresholds. In the case of the cruise operators and international hotels, the inclusion of offshore revenue and the use of aggregated ABN turnover pushed many businesses over the support threshold.

Guest Session with the Minister for Trade, Tourism and Investment, the Hon Dan Tehan MP

The Acting Chair, Mr John Hart welcomed the Minister for Trade and Tourism, the Hon Dan Tehan and thanked the Minister for the support measures provided to the industry to date and requested further consideration given the current state of the industry. The Minister acknowledged that the current spate of lockdowns has hit the industry hard across the country. The Minister noted that by Christmas, around 80 percent would have received a double dose of COVID vaccine which would enable further traction in opening up and build confidence. The immediate focus is to help the industry through the next 3-4 months. Any move to promote the rollout of the vaccine would be beneficial for the overall industry, including the Tourism Australia campaign. The Minister noted the enthusiasm to resume travel to Australia from his recent overseas trip to Singapore, Vietnam, United States and Korea. The Minister observed that travel will pick up strongly once Australia's borders do open. The Minister was keen to hear feedback from the Taskforce.

The Taskforce outlined the challenges faced by industry, including where Federal/State support (specifically the NSW support program) measures have fallen short for the accommodation and the cruise sectors– the need for site specific support and a review of the revenue threshold. The Taskforce also noted that lockdowns elsewhere in the country impact the flow of travellers to open destinations, decimating the industry. The Taskforce provided feedback on the SME Loan Scheme which is not working as effectively as envisioned with banks rejecting loan applications or reducing the loan

amount. The Minister is working with the ABA to work through the issues from the banks' perspective and with Treasury taking the lead on the program, the Minister will try to get traction.

The Taskforce highlighted issues with existing support measures such as the Travel Agents and Tour Operators Program. The Taskforce provided an overview of the ongoing development of a vaccine certificate to differentiate between vaccinated and unvaccinated travellers. The Minister highlighted that Australia is very close to finalising a vaccination certificate that will be recognised internationally as well as by the International Civil Aviation Authority (ICAO) in the form of a QR code. Domestically, proof of vaccination will also be in the form of a QR code.

The Minister also highlighted the need to manage the risks of mandating vaccinations in the workplace which differ based on OH&S laws of each of the States/Territories. The Taskforce noted that the area is highly complex and fraught with ambiguity with anything the Government can do to provide clarity would go a long way in assisting business. It was noted that ACCI had recently released a guide to employers on vaccination in workplaces including the legal issues around mandating.

Domestic Restriction Parameters

Australian Chamber-Tourism advocacy has consistently reinforced the need to differentiate between vaccinated and unvaccinated travellers and the need to open services to those vaccinated, which will continue to be pursued. The Taskforce noted that there was a need to influence State Premiers and Health Ministers to stay open over the next few months with a view towards vaccinated travellers, especially Queensland which will be hit hard in the lead up to next year.

Next Meeting will be held in September.

In attendance:

- Acting Chair - John Hart (Australian Chamber – Tourism)
- 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)
- Graham (Skroo) Turner (Flight Centre)
- Jacqui Walshe (The Walshe Group)
- Denis Pierce (Australian Tourism Export Council)
- Michael Johnson (Tourism Accommodation Australia)
- Bob East (Tourism Australia)

Observers

- Margaret Bowen, Austrade
- Sam Palmer, Austrade
- Victoria Maigre, Tourism Australia

Apologies

- Dr. Jeremy Johnson AM – Chair

Secretariat

- Jenny Lambert, Director – Tourism, ACCI
- Jen Low, Director - WHS, ACCI