

TOURISM RESTART TASKFORCE

Key Issues Meeting #21, 22 September 2021



Summary of National and State Announcements

The summary of restrictions was noted. It was noted that the restrictions changed frequently so it was hard to stay on top of it and that NSW and Victoria have released their roadmaps out of lockdown.

Guest: The Hon. David Elliott MP, NSW Minister for Police and Emergency Services

Given the important role that the NSW Government is playing in the road out of lockdown and also international restart, the Taskforce was joined by The Hon. David Elliott MP, NSW Minister for Police and Emergency Services. The Minister, who has had a strong association with tourism and accommodation over many years, shared his perspectives on reopening in NSW.

Tourism Business Support

The Taskforce noted that for some, especially NSW, the speed to market once the economy reopens will render the support unnecessary. However, for other jurisdictions and for some businesses which will still be impacted by government restrictions, it may not be as swift and there will likely be a need for continued support until the market picks up. There is already specific and targeted support in place for North QLD and ACT. The Taskforce noted issues with the SME Loan Scheme, especially challenges on the bank front, which has been ongoing. The Taskforce highlighted the benefit of having bridging finance available for when payments recommence since managing credit will prove challenging. The Taskforce reiterated that for the accommodation sector in particular foreign earned revenues are being considered to determine eligibility for support and hence there is no Government support provided to some of the larger hotels that are down revenue in Australia. This a serious concern as these businesses have been without support since the end of JobKeeper.

National Plan and Vaccine Timelines

One of the defining features of the timetable in real time is that Phases B and C are coming closer together since vaccination rates are picking up rapidly, especially in the context of NSW but lead time is needed to prepare for international reopening (as indicated under Phase C measures of the National Reopening Plan). Priorities need to be addressed very quickly in the short term to meet the quick reopening timeline. It was noted that the rhetoric has been about expanding home quarantine so hotels are looking at what the road out of quarantine will look like. However, for non-Australians (which will ramp up soon) and for Australians not returning to their home port, home quarantine was not an option and that there will continue to be a need for alternate arrangements such as hotel quarantine at least until the Commonwealth operated facilities are open by March next year.

The Taskforce stressed that there needs to be a clear position of advocacy on future quarantine arrangements. A tailored approach is likely needed for each cohort so that places can be freed up for more arrivals.

Tourism Restart Timetable Considerations

A number of considerations have been raised that need to be addressed to be able to move forward with the timetable. Vaccination certification has been raised in the domestic and international context with Services Australia and the States in relation to their plans. The issue of interoperability between the Commonwealth and States is being actively worked on since there are significant concerns with respect to identity anchoring and vaccine status on a number of jurisdictions' apps. The experience of both domestic and international tourists will be impacted since they will be required to use different apps to check-in in each jurisdiction. In addition, the possibility of a further High Court challenge to the arbitrary and continuing closure of State and Territory borders was noted.

Next Meeting will be held on 28 October.

In attendance:

- Dr Jeremy Johnson AM (Chair – Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry)
- John Hart (Australian Chamber – Tourism)
- 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
- Dusan Djukic, Tourism Australia

Apologies:

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

Secretariat

- Jenny Lambert, Director – Tourism, ACCI
- Jen Low, Director - WHS, ACCI
- Ingrid Fraser, Associate Director – Tourism, ACCI
- Tanya Roy, Policy Officer – Tourism, ACCI

Guest

- The Hon. David Elliott MP, NSW Minister for Police and Emergency Services