

TOURISM RESTART TASKFORCE

Key Issues Meeting #22, 28 October 2021



Summary of National and State Announcements

The summary of restrictions was noted, and the movement towards opening borders nationally and in many of the States was welcomed. However, the Taskforce noted that there is still a lot of confusion and uncertainty remaining. Inconsistencies remain across the states in relation to the mandating of vaccinations, with different timetables and different regimes across the states and territories which could lead to difficulties. The Taskforce noted the importance of being provided clear fixed dates in advance (e.g. in relation to the timeframe for welcoming skilled workers, international students and working holiday makers, and changing the Biosecurity Determinations to allow for the return of the cruise sector) to allow for sufficient planning.

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

The Chair, Dr Jeremy Johnson AM welcomed the Minister for Trade and Tourism, the Hon Dan Tehan, 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 the uncertain state of the industry, especially in terms of reimagining the visitor economy and stated that there is scope for change by Christmas. The Minister was enthusiastic about the international borders opening on 1 November 2021 allowing Australian citizens and their families to return to the country. The Minister stated that the momentum to open Australia is being undertaken in a progressive manner in accordance with the National Plan.

The Taskforce outlined the challenges faced by the industry, including uncertainty on quarantine arrangements, the Biosecurity Declaration, workforce shortages, and the need for specific support for the accommodation and the cruise sectors.

The Taskforce noted discussions with Quarantine Services Australia and highlighted the confusion around duration and mandates on quarantine arrangements planned for international students and skilled migrants. The Minister indicated that if the path set by New South Wales and Victoria is successful, fully vaccinated arrivals may not need to quarantine at all. The Minister thanked the Taskforce for its public advocacy on these issues and sought the Taskforce's continued support in this regard. Lastly, to address skills and labour shortages the Taskforce requested the Government to support continuing the Boosting Apprenticeship Commencement Wage Subsidy beyond 31 March 2022.

Tourism Business Support

The Taskforce noted that there is an important link between reopening and support, and there is also a lag at the end of the reopening period where some businesses that still can't attract customers will need support, including those reliant on international visitation that aren't going to reopen for some time. Those businesses will need some form of stimulus, for example in the aviation and hotel sectors to gear up for the reopening. The Taskforce stressed the need of increased and consistent support to

assist businesses to cope with the staffing and labour shortages. The Taskforce noted that the federal and state governments have joint responsibility and should work together to support the industry adequately.

Outstanding Issues

The Taskforce highlighted a couple of issues that require further clarity and are a work in progress. This included the need to update COVIDSafe practice guidelines, as there have not been many changes since March 2020. Secondly, clarity in relation to the ban on cruises and how states will respond once the ban is lifted. Further, issues regarding booster shots, including whether they will be mandated, and how that will impact the industry.

Labour & Skills Shortages

The Taskforce received a briefing from Australian Chamber – Tourism on advocacy in relation to skills and labour shortages, including skills development, migration, clarity around both domestic and international border restrictions and the plans for the resumption of international travel.

The Taskforce acknowledged it is a major issue for the tourism sector, being exacerbated as major states emerge from lockdown.

The Taskforce also noted that no decision has been made on a specific date to lift the ban on skilled migrants, however, there is a certain level of flexibility from the Department of Home Affairs on pre-approved visas.

Next Meeting will be held in late November/early December.

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)
- Jacqui Walshe (The Walshe Group)
- Denis Pierce (Australian Tourism Export Council)
- Michael Johnson (Tourism Accommodation Australia)
- Bob East (Tourism Australia)
- The Hon. Bruce Baird AM (Business Events Sydney, TTF)

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

Observers

- Margaret Bowen, Austrade
- Victoria Maigre, Tourism Australia

Apologies:

- Graham (Skroo) Turner (Flight Centre)

Secretariat

- Jenny Lambert, Director – Tourism, ACCI