



Australian
Chamber of Commerce
and Industry

TRANSCRIPT

Event: Andrew McKellar interview with Laura Jayes, AM Agenda Sky News.

Speakers: Andrew McKellar, chief executive Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Laura Jayes, host AM Agenda Sky News.

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E&OE

Laura Jayes, host AM Agenda Sky News: Join me live now as the chief executive officer of the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Andrew McKellar. Andrew, good to see you. That is certainly a lot of lost income. How is that being felt across the board? Is it small business that's hurting the most? Obviously, tourism businesses.

Andrew McKellar, chief executive Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry: Good morning, Laura. As you say, I mean, it's a very big sector. The tourism industry in a normal year, it's contributing about \$60 billion to our gross domestic product. There's more than 600,000 Australians that are employed in tourism. And around 300,000, maybe a few more, businesses directly involved in tourism. Of course, the ones that are most affected are at the smaller end of the chain. So it's travel agents, tourism venues, tourism operators, small businesses, a lot of them. It's a big impact and that sector has really been flattened for the past two years. So we are now sending the signal that the time has come to think seriously about reopening the borders. The way should be clear to do that in the weeks ahead as we get past the peak of this Omicron wave. And as we start to see the pressure coming off the health system, then really there will be no health reason why we can't contemplate opening up those international borders to a broader range-

Laura: Indeed.

Andrew: ... of travelers, including tourists.

Laura: Indeed, Andrew. National Cabinet is meeting today. So we know they'll be watching now. So what message would you like to send leaders? Because not only is it still closed to tourists, but we don't even have a date in which we might open or the criteria which would be required.

Andrew: Well, that that's exactly right. And I think this is the thing. We need to get ahead of the curve. We need to look a little bit further down the track and this could really be about a month away. But I think we need to sit down with industry and prepare those steps now so that they can plan on how they're going to structure their businesses when they're going to be able to get the employees that they need back in, when they're going to be able to open their doors or plan cash flow for the future. So those steps need to be taken now. We can't leave it until the last minute. We've got to plan ahead, set out the criteria, set out the timetable. Obviously, we understand if we have to react to circumstances, but I think let's have that dialogue now.

Laura: Andrew, thanks so much. We'll see what National Cabinet comes up with.

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