

Inquiry into the Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on the Tourism and Events Sectors

Mrs Susan Ryman-Kiernan

Organisation Name:

Your position or role:

YOUR SUBMISSION

Submission:

Help is desperately need for the Event Industry - the survival of hundreds of businesses and the jobs of thousands of people are in danger.

I am the Managing Director of a conference and event management company. We specialise in business events, working with corporate and association clients across a wide range of industry sectors including construction, education, intelligence, banking, medical, legal and government.

The portfolio of events we manage includes conferences, seminars, business summits, exhibitions and large-scale awards events. Historically these have been in-person events, but over the course of 2020 we diversified into on-line events. Whether the events are large or small and whether they are B2B or B2C they all drive growth for our clients and for the economy.

The business was founded in 1998 and over the past 22 years we have grown from a single owner operator business to a team of 10 event managers, designers and marketing professionals. We have strong relationships with our clients, many of whom have trusted us to manage their events year on year including some we have work with for over 10 year's. We also have an excellent reputation within our own industry having won eleven state and national Conference and Event Management awards.

2020 was an extremely difficult year for us as well for the broad event industry, we went from thriving to being stopped in our tracks on 13 March 2020 when the Federal Government has advised that 'non-essential' gatherings should be cancelled in an effort to limit coronavirus spread. In our case 60% of our contracted revenue was wiped off our books within a few weeks and have had no in-person events since. In-person events will not return for us until June 2021, 15 months since our last face-to-face event.

In order to survive we reduced the hours everyone worked, down to 3-days per week for much of 2020, this would not have shown up in the unemployment figures, but our team were under-employed with many struggling financially. Now without JobKeeper I am forced to cut my salary to zero so I can keep paying my team members for the next few months - we cannot afford to lose them as we need to be ready for the upturn in events.

Those who work in the Events Industry are hard-working, creative and resourceful people; we plan everything and put in long hours to ensure the success of the events we work on. It is my belief that is these qualities are reason so many of us have survived the last 12 months – that along with jobKeeper which was crucial in enabling us to keep teams of staff employed.

The end of JobKeeper along with continuing snap border closures means that whilst organisations are keen to get their people together to drive business there is a lack of confidence around business events. The risk of planning an event which may have to be cancelled due to a snap lock down is too high for many, with a lack of available event insurance the losses for an organisation would run into hundreds of 1000's dollars making

Our story is the same as the story of most companies across the Events Industry without action we cannot survive. What we need is:

Victorian Government

An understanding of the importance of events: Victoria's event industry contributes over \$10 billion a year to the state economy. We are not part of the tourism sector but the events we deliver drives economic growth in Victoria.

Targeted financial support to small business delivered quickly to help us survive and keep tens of thousands of skilled people employed.

Clearer COVIDSafe guidelines and an improved approval process for all events.

Federal Government

An understanding of the importance of events: Australia's event industry contributes over \$23 billion nationally. Events we create and deliver for our clients drives economic growth across a range of sectors.

JobKeeper to be replaced with a targeted support measure for the Event Industry for six months to allow us to ride out this storm and keep skilled people employed.

A national approach to borders closures so people can travel confidently within Australia, knowing that they will be able to get home after attending an event and continue working.

Provision of event insurance to help clients manage the financial risks of sudden cancellations.

FILE ATTACHMENTS

File1:

File2:

File3:

[Redacted content]

Signature:

Susan Ryman-Kiernan