

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

Mr Orlando Berne

Organisation Name:
Your position or role:

YOUR SUBMISSION

Submission:

My name is Orlando Berne, I am the founder and sole owner of Hit the Road Tours Australia Pty Ltd. The company started in 2018 and had exponential growth since then until Covid came. We run day tours from Melbourne, and in 2019 had more than 12,000 people travelling in our small buses and having amazing experiences in the State of Victoria. The 2020 year started under a lot of turbulence due to the summer bushfires, but we overcame the challenges and were starting to shine again. Then: Covid. We were not allowed to drive the buses out of the depot for more than 6 months, our group of 15 tour guides lost their jobs, and it was an immense pressure causing serious damage to my mental health. In December, with the reopening of the interstate borders, it came a light at the end of the tunnel, and the business were back to 30% of what was doing during the pre-Covid times. But the cluster in NSW just before Christmas, and the subsequent open/closing borders since then, has put again a lot of uncertainty in the business. And now, JobKeeper is gone. Today we got the news that the unemployment number has fallen again in Australia, and this is great. We see businesses thriving, happily back, maybe stronger than they were before Covid, and if on one side I'm very happy to see that, on the other just adds more frustration: Others are thriving, but we still have no idea how we are going to pay the bills next month. At the peak of the pandemic, we got payment pause from the lenders, grants from the Victoria government, and JobKeeper. We survived. But what now?? We got nothing, no support at all from either the Federal or State Government. And the travelers are not back. We need something similar to JobKeeper support to be able to survive, even if it's in the form of a long-term loan as I do not think the taxpayers' money should be used in the long term to support one specific industry. What we really want is very simple: just be allowed to run a tour business with the same happiness and satisfaction we had before, and had again the feeling that we are part of an important industry for the State of Victoria.

FILE ATTACHMENTS

File1:
File2:
File3:



Signature:
Orlando Berne