

Save Australian Tourism



Tourism Industry Calls for Action on Borders in Open Letter to State Premiers

MEDIA RELEASE

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The Australian tourism industry has come together in a call to the nation's State Premiers to reopen borders as part of a grassroots campaign to #SaveAussieTourism.

In the spirit of an industry-led petition, an open online letter has been endorsed by tourism's high profilers as well as its smaller independent operators and appeals to the states' leaders to demonstrate a way forward to restore interstate travel and protect the domestic tourism market. The letter, with an open invitation to join in support, is available here: www.saveaustralian tourism.com.

Signatories to date include an impressive line-up of the nation's tourism leaders including Flight Centre Travel Group CEO Graham Turner, Spicers Retreats Owner and Founder Jude Turner, Helloworld Travel Executive Director and CEO Cinzia and Andrew Burnes and Intrepid Travel CEO James Thornton. The list of signed supporters spans the breadth of the industry, from accommodation and tour operators to travel agents, vehicle hire companies, industry bodies and regional destination offices.

The Australian tourism industry has been hard hit by the Coronavirus pandemic, with many operators having been forced to close since the onset of the virus here in March, resulting in employee stand-downs and massive financial losses.

This is an industry that directly employs around 660,000 Australians. The losses to the tourism industry in turn impacts a swathe of other industries and millions more workers in both metropolitan and regional areas which service tourism businesses, from food producers to local retailers. The regional spread of people and businesses impacted reaches deep into virtually every electorate across the country. Tourism is vital to the health of regional economies across Australia.

Now, just as many businesses were planning to recommence operations, having incorporated operational measures to mitigate the risk of Coronavirus infection and start on the road to recovery, unpredicted extensions to state border closures have forced many to reconsider the economic viability of operating in the Australian tourism industry.

Craig Bradbery, Chief Operating Officer of Baillie Lodges who penned the open letter, said the industry's opportunity to benefit by reaching a whole new market of domestic travellers created by restrictions to overseas travel during COVID-19 had been dashed by the ongoing changes to state border restrictions.

"There's been so much support and pent-up demand to date from domestic travellers, but now as we've been forced to ask our guests to once again postpone their trips and re-arrange flights, people are fed up and losing confidence in the whole idea of planning and booking a holiday," Mr Bradbery said.

"For the tourism industry, this should have been our moment - a chance for Aussie travellers to discover the many wonders of our own remarkable country. But as state borders like Queensland and the Northern Territory now look to remain closed, tourism businesses can't survive for an extended period solely on the support from intrastate travellers," he said.

Intrepid Group Chief Executive Officer James Thornton said Australians were keen to support local tourism.

"The travel industry will only begin to recover through certainty and confidence in state border policy. The National Cabinet and state governments need to work collaboratively to offer clear and consistent guidelines on when borders will open," Mr Thornton said.

Baillie Lodges Founder James Baillie said now was the time for action to safeguard Australia's tourism future.

"We as an industry collective are asking the State Premiers to work together to come up with practical ways to allow Aussies to safely travel interstate and support each other's tourism industries," Mr Baillie said.

"Now's the time to plan positively, to support employment and businesses in each state and across the country, and to ensure that Australia retains its diverse and incredible tourism offering for when international travel resumes," he said.

"The groundswell of support for the campaign is reassuring and demonstrates the uniquely collegiate nature of the tourism industry in support of a common goal for good.

"We're hoping the open letter will be well received and inspire action on the part of the states' leaders simply and urgently to #SaveAussieTourism."

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