



MEDIA RELEASE

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ROADMAP TO RECOVERY DOESN'T PASS PUB TEST

Political leaders could be held to account by pub patrons and staff, if their favourite local venues are permanently shut as a result of the 'roadmap to recovery' and its failure to stop the collision course that will drive many hotels operators into a mountain of debt.

AHA CEO Stephen Ferguson said the sector had always supported the health measures which had seen a flattening of the COVID curve in Australia, but he added the hundreds of thousands of people directly employed in hotels would today be left wondering if they would have a job to come back to once restrictions are finally lifted.

He said the road to re-opening the Australian economy seems to be riddled with inconsistencies as to how different industries are treated and certainty was needed for thousands of mum and dad operators across Australia who were suddenly forced to close their businesses more than a month ago.

"Hotels have been left blindsided by the announcement today they basically will not be able to re-open their businesses until stage three of the recovery process," Mr Ferguson said.

"The roadmap to recovery measures announced today has not provided a plan to help pub and hotel operators who are being pushed to the wall by mounting debt and bills for their closed venues.

"There is inconsistency between businesses, why can baristas get work but not bar staff? Why can only 10 people be allowed in a dining area of a huge venue that could safely socially distance 120?"

"Our phones have been running hot this afternoon with confused members worried about their livelihoods, their staff and their mounting bills."

Mr Ferguson said the AHA had already recommended a range of measures addressing the social distancing issue to the National Cabinet.

"We are proud of the role we have played in helping combat COVID-19 and we absolutely believe lives come first," he said.

"However, today we are told only up to 10 people can sit and have a meal in a pub restaurant area, even if that area could safely socially distance 50 or 100.

"Hundreds still work side-by-side for eight hours a day in factories and on building sites, while some stores continue to cram people into each aisle, but a large hotel dining room is not allowed to serve meals to more than 10 seated patrons – where is the consistency?"

"Sadly, most hotels will be forced to remain closed while the bills keep coming in.

"Hotels have done the right thing, put the health of staff and patrons first the moment this pandemic hit – and we will continue to do so – but common sense needs to prevail here too."

AHA NSW and National President Scott Leach said the industry which was the heart of the community in regional areas, many of which are clear of Covid 19, had basically been left abandoned.

“During times of emergency like the recent bushfires, pubs are the places people turn to for help – we are the centre of our towns and suburbs and proudly so,” he said.

“That’s why we were amongst the first to act to close down and protect people from the pandemic. I can assure you as a publican, our industry is not in “hibernation” - your typical country pub is losing around \$30,000 each month and many of them are located in places which have never even seen a case of COVID-19.

“If Australia wants their local to make it through this crisis and be there for the recovery we need a bit of support - there really is a limit to how much debt we can take before many of us have to close for good.”

Figures released last week by AHA NSW show that of approximately 75,000 hotel and pub workers employed pre-crisis – a total of 94% or approximately 70,452 have been stood down or terminated in that state alone.

Media Contact: Jason Bartlett, 0433 95 46 57