

COVID-19 AGENDA

The impact of the corona virus

Further to this weekend's announcements regarding the corona virus a further addendum to the meeting note is warranted.

Public transport has been mentioned by the Prime minister and the State Premiers as still operating, although the tour and charter operations have all but disappeared, for the time being.

I wanted to provide you with Appsey's and my thoughts on what, we as a national body, should be focussing on in the face of reduced services or even shutdowns to our normal services and the impacts upon our workforce.

Our view is we should get onto the front foot and be providing the decision makers with our thoughts on how best to deal with our industry.

This will entail some form of contact with the National Transport Authority, the Federal Minister and the Trade Union. In the same way State Associations do likewise, I am sure.

You can rest assured if we leave the future of our industry however in the hands of bureaucrats, health experts and politicians and the like, without plenty of input, we are in trouble.

Most jurisdictions have put out these advices about how we should conduct ourselves during this time i.e.

We should:

- practice good hand and sneeze/cough hygiene
- stay home if we have travelled overseas in the last 14 days, are unwell, or have been in contact with a person with confirmed COVID-19.

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Organisations and employers who are responsible for a workplace or venue should start to take actions now to reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19.

This includes:

- Considering whether activities/events can be postponed, reduced in size/frequency or cancelled.
- Cancelling non-essential activities such as business travel, study visits, extra-curricular activities and sporting events.
- Encouraging, where possible, flexible working arrangements including working from home and off-peak travel and considering whether staff workstations can be more widely spaced.
- Ensuring adequate hand washing facilities and soap are available.
- Providing and promote hand sanitisers at building entrances.
- Ensuring high standards of routine environmental cleaning. Standard cleaning products are fine.
- Cleaning and disinfecting high touch surfaces regularly, including desks and keyboards and in our case the buses. This may require more cleaners to be engaged.
- Opening windows, enhancing airflow, adjust the air-conditioning.
- Encouraging preventive actions including personal hygiene (handwashing, reducing face contact, cough etiquette), physical distancing and taking time off when unwell.
- Avoiding large indoor meetings and lunchrooms and use outdoor venues, if possible.
- Planning for increased levels of staff absences.
- Planning for what to do if staff arrive sick at work.

Handling of cash

- For intermittent handling of cash, our drivers especially and others who may have to handle the day's takings, should be encouraged to perform hand hygiene immediately after handling cash (either soap and water or hand sanitizer, whichever is available).
- This means hand sanitizers may need to be available to support this across a range of settings that don't currently have this.
- For longer periods of cash handling i.e. during a service our drivers should wear gloves while handling cash, and then carefully remove the gloves and perform hand hygiene at the end of the period of cash handling.

There are no recommendations to stop using public transport at this time.

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Transport authorities advise that those who use public transport should:

- plan ahead and consider travelling outside peak hour where possible
- minimise contact with doors
- use transport cards and contactless payments where possible
- stay home and avoid travel altogether if unwell
- practice good hand hygiene by washing your hands regularly to protect yourself, fellow commuters and other staff.

Transport authorities advise transport providers that they should:

- Take all the relevant actions recommended by authorities for workplaces etc.
- Consider whether your transport service can be adjusted to increase separation of passengers and avoid queuing.
- Plan ways to reduce in-person contact for passengers and staff.
- Actively encourage sick passengers and staff to stay at home.
- Open windows and adjust air conditioning to increase airflow.
- Ensure the highest hygiene practices amongst all staff.
- Consider using advertising space on the buses for public health messages around COVID-19.
- Keep informed of the developments with the virus and update staff and members of the public with the actions you are taking.

BIC has the view that communication with staff, passengers, regulators and decision makers is the best protection to ensure that you come out the other side with a business intact.

FURTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

1. BIC advocates to Government, at all levels, at this critical time, that public transport is an essential service for the reasons that it provides social equity to those persons, elderly, young or sick, who don't have access to a car or monies to hire a taxi or Uber but still have a need to get to their schools, doctors, hospitals, shopping centres, families and other essential visitations.
2. BIC recommendations that Operators and their State Associations make representations to their various State jurisdictions that regulate transport service contracts to understand what 'force majeure' provisions are applicable under existing contract arrangements in their transport service contracts to protect payments to all staff.

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3. BIC encourages all Operators to stay close to their workforce even if some are laid off or stood down by providing as much information as is known and to provide support services wherever appropriate to all staff.
4. BIC supports, provided that labour costs are maintained under service contracts, that wages to those relevant employees continue to be paid to all employees (casual, part time and permanent) during any stand down period.
5. BIC recommend to its members that they should adhere to a strict work, health and safety measures recommended by the various federal and state health bodies, including social distancing, cash handling and limitations on gatherings. In this regard BIC members with service contracts, subject to contractual issues, should be prepared to remove cash handling from their buses or otherwise to initiate mitigation procedures for handling cash including use of gloves and significant cleaning of buses. Stood down staff could easily fill the breach to ensure adequate cleaning of buses at this time.
6. BIC considers it is an imperative that employment within the deregulated coach and charter industry is retained wherever possible to ensure that those businesses have drivers when this sector is no longer threatened by the virus.
7. In this regard Operators are encouraged to seek all or part of the Federal Government's packages for small businesses and for drivers to be encouraged to seek the safety benefits provided to those employees who are stood down or have lost their jobs. In this way operators are encouraged to remain in close contact with drivers to ensure their well-being, even if they have been stood down or let go. Operators should try to provide other work to those drivers if it is available in their businesses.
8. Going forward, BIC will mount an immediate campaign through the ACCI Tourism Forum, of which it is a member and also with direct representation to Government to ensure that funding is made available to the coach and charter industry as a major provider of transport as support for Australia's tourism industry and to ensure that support funds are not directed solely at the airlines and rail networks.
9. Mindful of the considerable anxiety resulting from the pandemic BIC members should ramp up the availability to their employees (those still working and those stood down) to EAP providers.

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