

View from Canberra

6 August 2020

OUR INDUSTRY IS PART OF AUSTRALIA'S ECONOMIC RECOVERY STORY

I have no desire to add to the social or political commentary currently circulating the 'epicentres' of Covid-19 across the globe (and most recently on our own home turf). I will however make an obvious observation. Despite what has gone before, the **Victorian government has pivoted** and is trying (some may argue not efficiently) to get the state back to health. As I write this column, Victoria is barely into its first 24-hours of an expected 6-week 'lockdown'. We all need to acknowledge that times are especially tough for our colleagues and associates in Victoria and be ready to support our bus and coach friends now and after they emerge from their current predicament.

I think it is important to recognise that this pandemic came close to shutting down the ENTIRE *moving people* task across Australia. Within a matter of days of the pandemic being declared on March 11 by the WHO, the BIC was aware of a number of businesses already making decisions to completely close or suspend business. By March 23, Australia was in Stage 1 of its emergency response (social gathering restrictions) and two days later, closed its international borders. In the last few months we have had state-border closures, opens and re-closures that one cannot help but muse how we ever managed to get along, for long enough, to federate our states.

It is my observation over these past few months that Industry has proven its resilience, its capacity to bare the burden, its ability to be flexible and provide clever and sensible solutions. The 'federation' of our own bus associations – the Bus Australia Network – is a fine example of what can happen when we all pull together, share our knowledge-base and resources to find the solutions. Working with governments and regulators is at times challenging but the Bus Australia Network has set a fast pace to provide information to governments to help them landscape a transport position as part of their emergency response plans and to ensure Industry is on the economic recovery agenda.

In recent weeks, the BIC has been on the phone, digital face-timing and putting the pen to paper to garner federal, state and local government support for Industry in their economic recovery plans. There are 3 significant areas that we have advocated to governments:- 1) bus infrastructure projects from shovel ready to major works; 2) tourism restart to encourage Australians to travel across the continent not over it; and 3) diversification and innovative technology in our manufacturing and supply sector. The response that we have had from all levels of government across a range of jurisdictions has been extremely supportive of our ideas. A number of politicians and bureaucrats are enthusiastic to hold discussions on how we might progress these initial 'economic boosters' into action. The bureaucratic process can be slow but I am confident that we are well placed to negotiate some good stuff for us bussies.

Bus Australia Network



View from Canberra

The most recent announcement (July 22) from the Morrison government to form the National Covid-19 Commission Advisory Board (formerly the coordination commission) has been charged with looking at business initiatives to support a "supply-side" economic approach to Covid-19 recovery. I think the main game is to create jobs – and lots of them – and in order to do this, the Morrison government will be looking at opportunities for relaxing tax on business (make it less costly to run a business) and to 'de-regulate' the regulated (cut the red tape). This "supply-side" approach presents a great opportunity for Industry broadly to reap some benefits. Our manufacturing and supply sector are expert producers and suppliers of goods and services in our industry. It is also important to note that our supply sector goes well beyond just the building of buses and coaches and offers a unique labour skill set and innovation in technology and safety.

I hope after reading this column you are on board with me in acknowledging that the businesses in our industry are strong, highly skilled and we are unique providers of automotive vehicles, purveyors of people movement, engineers of safety and high-tech solutions. Together we can all be part of Australia's economic recovery.

Keep safe and well. Keep informed at the Industry Hub: ozebus.com.au/covid.

Bus Australia Network

