

## Statement – for immediate release Regional Victoria: It's time to really Open

4 June 2021

In February 2021, following Lockdown 3.0 the Victorian Regional Chamber Alliance together with like groups released a letter to the **State Government** asking for a detailed plan of how the State would manage any further lockdowns.

In February, we suggested a more nuanced approach when shutting down areas and regions. A 'one-size-fits-all' approach may have been necessary in the early days of this virus, but a total shut-down of the economy cannot be the only answer if we are to live with some levels of the virus in the community into the future. It must be acknowledged that other states have managed to identify and localise shutdowns and restrictions.

Here we are in again in June with another shut down and continuing restrictions as we look towards the long weekend and school holidays.

Once again, we welcome the state Government's decision to slightly ease restrictions in regional Victoria, but to imply regional Victoria is open, dismisses the reality for so many regional businesses.

Most sectors continue to be impacted either by remaining locked down or are so constrained by density limits, they cannot afford to open, or if open will incur financial losses.

*"In the absence of Melbourne visitors, we ask the government to support regional Victorian's capacity to support regional Victorian businesses. Regional businesses who rely on the Melbourne market are effectively still in a "soft lockdown" because their customers in a hard lockdown."*

*"Lockdowns for one week can equal anywhere between 3 and 8 weeks adverse impact on a businesses revenue. It affects consumer confidence when they think about re-booking. The State Govt, when imposing a lockdown, must support businesses that are doing the right thing. Through no fault of their own, they are at risk of going to the wall"*

*Paul Martino, Chair Ballarat Regional Tourism*

*Regional business wants the chance to trade their way out of this pandemic and have demonstrated overwhelmingly over many months, they can adhere to conditions that allow them to trade safely.*

*Jodie Gillett, CEO Commerce Ballarat*

We ask the Victorian Government to return regional Victoria to pre lock down conditions and give our regional economy the chance it needs to survive.

Regional Victoria's hearts go out to our friends, family and colleagues in Melbourne and understand the pain that lockdown brings. We look forward to welcoming Melbournians back when the time is right. In the meantime, we want our regional community who have not been impacted by the pandemic, to have the opportunity to thrive, for the benefit of our economy and our wellbeing.

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