

AGENT GRASSROOTS ADVOCACY – November 2021

Speaking Points for Meeting

Context

- To maximise your impact, you need to deliver key facts in an organised, concise way.
- The Federal Member of Parliament you are meeting with meets with many local constituents every week and has an extraordinary volume of information to process as part of Parliamentary duties.
- The most effective meetings are those that provide relevant information from a local perspective and have a clear ask for the MP to act on.
- In addition to providing a clear overview, you need to leave time for questions. Most electorate meetings run for just 30 minutes so being organised is important.

- **We need to overturn the belief that just because international travel is now possible again, life is back to normal for us – when in fact it won't be before mid 2022 and ongoing support is critical**

Speaking Points

1. **A quick overview of your business** including team size, consumer support provided during CV, and business profile
2. **Your Key Messages:**

The introduction of isolation and travel shutdown measures here and around the world in response to the Omicron COVID variant means our workload is yet again spiking while consumer and corporate confidence in travel has taken yet another massive hit.

Consumer and Corporate Travellers need us now more than ever. There's still \$2Billion in outstanding Credits for COVID-impacted travel we are chasing for Australians plus, given the growing challenges of international travel, the 70% of international travel booked by Australians through a travel agent will climb dramatically.

But, my business and our Sector are in the worst state we have experienced since this began and Q122 is going to be even harder. We simply will not survive without Government support through to mid 2022 when hopefully international travel starts to normalise and some decent revenue starts to flow.

We are grateful for the Government's support to date but we need the remaining unallocated \$60M left from the Consumer Travel Support Grant plus an additional \$90M to rebuild our workforce so that we can keep supporting travelling Australians who need us now more than ever and who will keep needing our expertise as we learn to travel globally with COVID.

3. **Driving the messages home**

As the red list of countries hit by Omicron keeps growing, travelling Australians need our help more than ever. We are not only helping Australians impacted right now by these changes including those already overseas, but we also have a mountain of bookings which also need to be

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managed. This will further impact consumer confidence in booking – the fact is that we will only start to see revenue of any significance from the middle of next year and it won't normalise before 2023.

Travel Agents were the first hit by CV and will be the last to recover – our entire sector has been in hard lockdown since March 2020 (600 days+) when the international travel ban was imposed

- We were a thriving business prior to COVID-19 travel restrictions.
- We have been operating with X% of pre-CV income since March 2020. The hit to revenue for most travel agencies is close to 100% year on year and likely to continue like this well into 2022 as a result of the impact of the staged recovery

We are providing invaluable and critical support for our customers (and non-customers) in getting back their credits and refunds from hotels, airlines, cruise liners, tour operators. \$8Billion secured so far on behalf of consumers but there's still \$2Billion outstanding. We are doing this in an environment with almost no income.

- If you've tried to sort a refund, credit or rebooking on COVID-impacted travel, you know how complex, stressful and lengthy the process is;
- The reality is that consumers are only going to become more exposed and need more help given the complexities of COVID-travel, restrictions and shutdowns;
- Without businesses like mine, consumers will have to turn to ACCC and the Fair Trading/Consumer Affairs Departments in each State and Territory – specialised expertise is needed to navigate the individual Terms and Conditions that each supplier has. This is not a role that Government can easily absorb even were there are people available to meet the demand.
- A third of the jobs in our sector have been wiped out – that's 15,000 travel professionals no longer providing support to consumers.

4. OUR ASK OF YOU/What we need you to do for us:

Government has already recognised our unique circumstances with the Consumer Travel COVID Support Grant. But we are now in an even worse situation than we were when that support was provided and that is not going to get better until at least the middle of next year.

We have lost more than a third of our skilled travel professionals (15,000) with more jobs set to go without immediate government support. We were thriving and growing businesses prior to COVID and the challenges of travelling internationally in these times means more and more Australians are turning to us.

Prior to COVID 70% of all international travel Australians booked was through their local travel agent, and we know from our own experience that this has already increased. BUT without Government support, we won't be here to help and these bookings will go offshore to non-Australian companies.

- **Travel Sector Skills Retention and Recovery Package** – an additional \$90 million on top of the remaining unallocated \$60M from the COVID Consumer Travel Support Package to support

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travel agencies, tour operators, wholesalers or consolidators as a one-off payment. As with aviation, our team members are the crucial link to reconnecting Australia to the world and delivering economic growth. This potential support package is tied to payroll and the costs of employment and reemployment of the sector and will support Australian consumers through the refund process.