



## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

### SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC RESPONSE

Mr Alistair Coe MLA (Chair), Ms Tara Cheyne MLA (Deputy Chair), Mrs Vicki Dunne MLA,  
Mr Michael Pettersson MLA, Ms Caroline Le Couteur MLA

#### Select Committee on the COVID-19 Pandemic Response QUESTION ON NOTICE

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#### Asked by TARA CHEYNE MLA on 11 MAY

In relation to: Operation of pubs and clubs as restrictions relax:

To both keep track of who is entering the premises and to manage patron numbers, could clubs and pubs easily implement a booking system (like restaurants have) for people wanting to access these venues? What would be the pros and cons of a booking system and would it be a burden to for clubs and pubs to implement?

#### **Anthony Brierley, General Manager, Australian Hotels Association ACT Branch: The answer to the Member's question is as follows:-**

The most important assistance the hospitality industry needs at this point in time is to be permitted to reopen in a viable manner as soon as possible.

While some venues are have continued to trade or have recently reopened, this is not an indication that they are, necessarily, viable businesses. The provision of JobKeeper payments from the Commonwealth Government and the effect of the ACT Government's *Leases (Commercial and Retail) COVID-19 Emergency Response Commercial Leases Declaration 2020* mean that some hospitality businesses have been able to trade with significantly reduced revenue.

Simply, the current 10-person limit is not be viable for many hospitality businesses. A future limit of 20 patrons will not be viable. The continuation of social distance requirements (including 1.5 metres between individuals and one person per 4 square metres) is incompatible with a profitable hospitality industry.

Therefore, the conversation about reopening needs to be focused on how particular health requirements such as one person per 4 square metres can be removed, and what alternate restrictions can be introduced such that they overall safety of the venue is maintained.

It has been suggested that a booking system may be helpful for keeping track of patrons who enter a venue and for managing overall patron numbers. While it may well be helpful, it is not necessarily the best regulatory solution for the ACT Government in concert with the Chief Medical Officer to adopt.

The Australian Hotels Association ACT Branch together with the United Workers Union has developed a compromise position which we believe better improves the safety within hospitality venues for patrons and staff. This position includes mandatory staff training, two days of paid pandemic leave for JobKeeper staff, re-opening to be subject to registration and completing a risk assessment, hospitality venues rostering a 'Venue Hygiene Officer' and holding a Master Security Licence, and a requirement for businesses to have Work Health and Safety Representatives.

At present, a booking system is not part of this joint position.

I am concerned that implementing a booking system as has been suggested by other industry associations will require hospitality venues to more comprehensively comply with the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner's *Australian Privacy Principles* as well as the *Privacy Act 1988*. This compliance presents an additional cost for hospitality businesses. A cost-benefit analysis is impossible as long as the specific benefit is opaque – it needs to be weighed against how much safer a venue becomes if it has a booking system.

I believe that for the purpose of tracing customers in the event of COVID-19 outbreak, strongly encouraging customers to download the Commonwealth Government's COVIDSafe app is a better solution. Requiring hospitality venues to keep their own records seems to duplicate the function and purpose of the COVIDSafe app.

However, if a booking system meant that hospitality venues could open sooner and with greater patron numbers, I am sure the industry would support it. The booking system would need to be a temporary measure, only being required during the declared emergency period. For the industry to give it appropriate consideration, it would need to be clear how many *extra* patrons a business could have, and how much sooner that business could re-open to those *extra* patrons, when compared against a business that did not have a booking system.

For the purposes of managing patron numbers inside a venue, I believe that a dedicated Venue Hygiene Officer and a venue holding a Master Security Licence is a better approach. This position has the support of the key employer and employee associations, ensures accountability within the employment structure of the business and ensures compliance at the outset, rather than requiring ongoing monitoring.

Approved for circulation to the Select Committee on the COVID-19 pandemic response

Signature:

Date:

By the [Minister for .....], [name of Minister]