

Inquiry into the Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on the Tourism and Events Sectors

Mr Brad Buchanan

Organisation Name:
Your position or role:

YOUR SUBMISSION

Submission:

I am writing to you to request support for the Event and Exhibition industry in Victoria.

COVID-19 and the subsequent government responses and directives have impacted all Victorians without exception. However it's hard to imagine many industries that has been economically decimated to the degree the events and exhibition industry, and businesses who rely on events and exhibitions, have been.

Context:

AFI Branding is a print and frame commercial signage manufacturer based in Carrum Downs Victoria. We've been in continued operation for over 28 years, employing local people in manufacturing and enjoyed many years of profitable operation, committed to creating better lives for our people (staff, customers, suppliers, and stakeholders)

When COVID-19 hit in March 2020 all work that we had in the production and revenue pipeline for events and exhibitions was put on hold. This represents 50% of our business as normal revenue. The other 50% of our revenue and work is in retail signage and fit-outs. Most of this work was put on hold also.

Over the proceeding months we were able to recommence some of our retail work, pivot to provide some COVID essential products (masks and hand sanitiser stands), however the work for our clients in events and exhibitions has not come back at all. Each time the government institutes a lock-down, event organisers move events further out, and the work accompanying these events moves out too.

Some critical challenges for AFI Branding and our customers in Events and Exhibitions:

Moving into 2021 AFI Branding is operating at 50% of normal budgeted operational revenue

We have gone from a workforce of 45 people to a workforce of 38 (4 people made redundant & 4 people leaving and not replaced)

We have major customers, some of whom we've partnered with for 20years or more who would normally spend - \$1million; \$300,000; \$200,000; \$100,000+ - who have had close to zero revenue

Many of our customers have lost key staff, who could not stay on job keeper only, and had to move into other industries to find work & income

Risk to Victorian economy:

If there isn't clear support for businesses in this critical industry, we fear the following potential dire outcomes:

- Australian owned businesses will go to the wall
- People will lose their jobs and struggle to support their families
- Melbourne and Victoria will lose critical talent – businesses and individuals – that have allowed us to build a reputation as Australia's event capital, and one of the greatest cities in the world for events

We are asking the government on our behalf, on behalf of our staff, our customers and their staff and on behalf of our state to seriously craft and implement a strategy that will help events and exhibitions to go ahead, and business in this industry to get back to work, generating work, revenue and opportunities critical to the future of Victorians and Victoria.

Please do what you can to prioritise this support for our industry.

Kind regards

Brad

FILE ATTACHMENTS

File1:

File2:

File3:



Signature:

Brad Buchanan