



AUSTRALIAN HOTELS
ASSOCIATION



Tourism
Accommodation
Australia

A division of the AHA



24 December 2020

Prime Minister Hon Scott Morrison MP
Chair of National Cabinet
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Cc: First Ministers

Dear Prime Minister,

National Cabinet – Hotel Quarantine

We are writing to you in your role as Chair of the National Cabinet. We note that we wrote to National Cabinet on 2 December on this same matter (**attached**).

Background

Our quarantine hotel members and their staff are on the front-line, working in close partnership with Governments to protect the community and economy from COVID-19. We understand that the states and territories control hotel quarantine and are responsible for the policies procedures and protocols in place to ensure infection prevention and control. We are advised that the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC) exercises strong oversight of hotel quarantine.

We recognise that the system can never be foolproof and that leakage is inevitable. But we believe that there is one more step that can be taken to help minimise further outbreaks. That step would be for the states and territories to agree to measuring best practice of each jurisdiction's hotel quarantine infection prevention and control schemes.

It is our understanding that each of the states and territories have different policies, procedures and protocols. However, AHPPC oversight does not include independent transparent measuring of best practice of such policies, procedures and protocols. Such variance includes for example:

- Varying frequency and types of testing for COVID-19
- Different rules relating to multiple employment of hotel workers
- Different policies relating to the training and monitoring of hotel workers
- Different requirements for airline crews relating to accommodation and repatriation

Request

We seek the support of National Cabinet to appoint an independent transparent hotel quarantine oversight agency to work with the states and territories to establish and measure best practice of infection prevention and control processes across all jurisdictions, and to keep us informed.

Yours faithfully

STEPHEN FERGUSON
AHA NATIONAL CEO

MICHAEL JOHNSON
CEO TAA

DEAN LONG
CEO AA

2 December 2020

Hon Scott Morrison MP
Prime Minister
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Cc: Hon Greg Hunt MP. Minister for Health
Nev Power, Chair National COVID-19 Commission Advisory Board

Dear Prime Minister,

National Cabinet – Hotel Quarantine

The Australian Hotels Association (AHA) and Tourism Accommodation Australia (TAA) (a division of the AHA) and the Accommodation Association (AA) wish to make the following submission regarding hotel quarantine as it relates to the COVID-19 pandemic. We are hoping the submission could be considered by the National Cabinet.

Hotels and quarantine

Quarantine hotels and their staff have been on the front-line, working in close partnership with Government to protect the community from COVID-19. The acquisition of private accommodation businesses for public health purposes is unprecedented. Their co-operation and support has enabled thousands of Australians to return home. Our members remain willing to assist, but we believe there are risks which can be minimised for the health and safety of not only our workers, but the wider community.

Proper processes are critical to minimising the risk of errors occurring. It is our strong view that the greatest exposure to risk of further lockdowns of our sector is from overseas travellers. As such, hotel quarantine remains a key national policy priority to contain the spread of COVID-19.

The need for oversight

There have been two major government reviews into hotel quarantine, and we are keen to see those recommendations adopted nationally (Halton and Coate). The states and territories are improving their models on a regular basis, but the reviews identify variations in standards and room for improvement. We are keen to see all jurisdictions at best practice.

In her review for the National Cabinet, Jane Halton AO PSM identified eight state and territory jurisdictions are separately in control of hotel quarantine and noted:

- “There is no single source of complete data on hotel quarantine”
- “Significant variations in standards and care”
- “Many jurisdictions demonstrate a high standard ... while others are implementing the minimum standards ... there are areas for improvement in each jurisdiction”
- “Breaches should be monitored to identify areas of improvement”

- “A clearer focus on risk Would help in creating a framework for the adoption of different approaches – it is timely to review the risk settings”

From the Jane Halton review, it seems there are still some areas for review and determination, e.g.:

- Which areas are at best practice?
- Which areas and jurisdictions are meeting only minimum standards?
- Which areas and jurisdictions need improvement?

In her review of the Victorian outbreak, Jennifer Coate AO recommended:

- Governing body reporting to Minister
- Single workplace per employee
- Salaried employees only
- Regular independent audits

The Victorian Government has largely accepted the Coate recommendations with additional infection controls including:

- All staff will work exclusively in the quarantine program and at specific sites
- A ban on secondary face-to-face employment for key staff
- Daily testing of staff
- Voluntary regular testing of their family members
- A centralised contact tracing team
- Advanced contact tracing

The Victorian initiatives above would seem to be at best practice and are worthy of consideration at a national level.

Recommendation

Reporting to the National Cabinet, appoint a national hotel quarantine oversight agency to work with the states and territories to:

- Establish, measure and publicly report on best practice of government processes across all jurisdictions
- Ensure the recommendations of Jane Halton AO and Jennifer Coate (and other) reviews are implemented on a national basis
- Keep the AHA, TAA and AA informed and up-to-date on improvements, issues and plans

Yours faithfully,



STEPHEN FERGUSON
AHA NATIONAL CEO



MICHAEL JOHNSON
CEO TAA



DEAN LONG
CEO AA