

**VICTORIA'S ENTERTAINMENT, HOSPITALITY, ARTS AND CULTURE LEADERS
PLEA TO CHO IN OPEN LETTER TO RETURN TO PRE-LOCKDOWN CONDITIONS -
BEFORE THERE'S NOTHING LEFT!**

MELBOURNE (10 June 2021) - More than 200 of Victoria's leading business figures across Entertainment (promoters, agents, venues, festivals), Hospitality (bars, pubs, clubs, restaurant), and Arts and Culture organisations have signed an Open Letter to the Victorian Chief Health Officer, Professor Brett Sutton, in relation to lifting restrictions.

The Open Letter urges the CHO to work with these industries to safely ease restrictions as soon as possible.

Industries urgently need a roadmap and the timeline to return to pre-lock down settings, in order to plan and survive.

This recent fourth extended lockdown in Melbourne has further devastated these industries, with billions of dollars lost in revenue and further jobs on the line.

Key figures calling on the CHO include:

- **Entertainment:** *Live Nation (Roger Field & Michael Coppel), Mushroom Group (Matt Gudinski & Dion Brant), TEG/TEG Dainty (Geoff Jones & Paul Dainty), Michael Cassel Group (Michael Cassel), Hardware (Richie McNeil), Onelove (Frank Cotela), Unified Music Group (Jaddan Comerford), Frank Stivala OAM (Premier Artists) and Untitled Group (Nicholas Greco).*
- **Artists/comedians/media personalities:** *Julia Morris, Missy Higgins, Natalie Bassingthwaighe, Claire Bowditch, Kate Langbroek, Mark Wilson, Nazeem Hussain, The Amity Affliction, Illy, Clowns and Bodyjar.*
- **Hospitality:** *The Big Group (Bruce Keebaugh), Chris Lucas, Shane Delia, Antoine Reymond, Australian Venue Co (Paul Waterson), Scott Pickett, Ezard Group, Shannon Bennett, Nick and Daniel Russian.*
- **Venues:** *Marriner Group (Forum Melbourne, Princess Theatre, Regent Theatre, Comedy Theatre), Palais Theatre, Max Watts, 170 Russell, Her Majesty's Theatre, Playbill, The Night Cat, The Tote, Prince Bandroom, Evelyn Hotel.*
- **Festivals:** *A Day on The Green, Falls Festival, Festival X, Babylon Festival, Ability Fest (Dylan Alcott Foundation).*
- **Arts and Culture organisations:** *Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, Melbourne Theatre Company, The Australian Ballet.*
- **Trade organisations:** *Live Performance Australia, Australian Festival Association, Music Victoria.*

Excerpts from the Open Letter:

“Melbourne has long prided itself on being the food, cultural and entertainment capital of Australia but the repeated lockdowns, coupled with a very slow return to viable venue operational capacities, are having a crippling long-term effect and have brought our industries to the brink of collapse.

Our city is recognised as the live music capital of the world with more live music venues (538) per capita than any other city in the world, and countless renowned restaurant and hospitality venues. Yet our sectors are facing financial ruin due to a lack of trust, understanding and meaningful dialogue. For social, creative and economic reasons we must be trusted to literally stand on our own two feet. Trust us, we won't let you down.

During the last several months we have worked in collaboration with Health and Government officials with regards to our ability to operate our businesses in strict Covid-safe Compliance.

Prior to this current lockdown, many venues have been able operate at 100% capacity, without incident, to the required standards of Victorian Health.

We appreciate the need to respect epidemiological science and the need for the occasional imposition of restrictions.

However, we urge you to consider the application of the science in sanctioning a return to the levels of business operations that applied immediately prior to the reimposition of blanket restrictions on Thursday 29 May.

Each business sector had already lodged and been approved for a Covid-safe mode of operation and compliance.

We, therefore, see no reason for the imposition of blanket reduced capacities and other restrictions across all environments as we emerge from this extended lock-down.

Our businesses already meet the highest level of compliance in our day-to-day operations with respect to ticketed attendances, reservation systems, enforced QR Code check-in, and patron flow management.

Without JobKeeper support and ongoing rental relief, a delayed reactivation will erode the already tenuous financial viability of our businesses, whilst destroying the spirit of the people on whom we depend to service our clients and to maintain Melbourne's quality of life.”

Read the full Open Letter here: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1SA4gZrHZmSpfcqAr8-SjzvSTpq-Lv9mTZ6gm1zXkBeY/edit>

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