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Herald Sun

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Industry leaders make desperate 'reopen' plea to Brett Sutton

Powerful restaurant and arts leaders have signed an open letter to Brett Sutton, warning Melbourne's food and entertainment scene is on the brink of collapse.



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Industry leaders are pleading with Brett Sutton to let Victoria reopen. Picture: NCA NewsWire

Powerful entertainment, hospitality, arts and culture leaders have penned an open letter to Victorian chief health officer Brett Sutton with a desperate plea to save industries on the brink of collapse.

The open letter — with 200 signatories including touring giants Live Nation, Frontier, TEG Dainty, musical theatre producer Michael Cassel, hospitality kings Chris Lucas, Shane Delia, Shannon Bennett and Bruce Keebaugh, theatre owners Marriner Group, and the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, Melbourne Theatre Company, and Australian Ballet — asks the CHO for a road map and the timeline to return to [pre-lockdown settings](#) in order to plan and survive.

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crippling long-term effect and have brought our industries to the brink of collapse,” the letter says.



The Melbourne Symphony Orchestra was one of the 200 signatories. Picture: Jake Nowakowski

It adds: “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.”

The industry leaders say they’ve worked with Health and Government officials to operate their businesses in strict Covid-safe compliance.

“We appreciate the need to respect epidemiological science and the need for the occasional imposition of restrictions,” the letter says.

“However, we urge you to consider the application of the science in sanctioning a return to the levels of

“We ... see no reason for the imposition of blanket reduced capacities and other restrictions across all environments as we emerge from this extended lockdown.”

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The letter adds: “A delayed reactivation will erode the already tenuous financial viability of our businesses, while destroying the spirit of the people on whom we depend to service our clients and to maintain Melbourne’s quality of life.”





Top chef Shannon Bennett. Picture: Nicki Connolly





Live Nation president Asia Pacific, Roger Field, initiated the open letter.

Roger Field, president of Live Nation Asia Pacific, which initiated the open letter, told the Herald Sun: “It’s very clear everyone is hurting, but everyone is also very frustrated.

“There’s an understanding of the circumstances we’re in, and a ... need for circuit breaker lockdowns, but what we all find exasperating is the amount of time and effort that has gone into educating Department of Health and the CHO as to the capabilities of our industries for contact tracing and responsible operation.

“It took us months and months of hard work, and repeated submissions, to get to where we were pre-lockdown, and we’re extremely worried we will take at least four weeks to get back to that point from now, if not longer.”

Mr Field added: “We run businesses and we can’t continue to isolate ourselves from the realities of having to plan what next week, and the week after, holds for us.

“We are trying to express a collective voice. We’re pleading for a stepping off from where we were, rather than starting all over again.”

TV presenter Julia Morris, musicians Missy Higgins, Natalie Bassingthwaight and Illy, comedian Nazeem Hussain, and broadcaster Kate Langbroek also signed the open letter.

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