

Open letter to the Prime Minister, Premiers and Chief Ministers as members of the National Cabinet

LACK OF COORDINATION ON BORDERS HAS SERIOUS CONSEQUENCES FOR AUSTRALIANS

We acknowledge we must put the health of Australians first.

Border closures have been an important part of Australia's response to COVID-19 and it is imperative that the health of Australians underpins policy decisions.

The rapid and piecemeal implementation of complex and inconsistent domestic border restrictions in response to COVID-19 is impacting families, destroying jobs and crippling the Australian economy's ability to recover from this pandemic.

In May, we welcomed the National Cabinet's announcement of a nationally agreed three-step COVID Safe plan – and commitment to “track progress against agreed precedent conditions, determine the pace of moving through the steps, and make any further decisions to move forward safely and with confidence”.

Instead, what has emerged is a patchwork of inconsistent state and territory-based rules that ignore the reality of the way small and large businesses operate across borders and Australians live their lives.

We accept that states and territories have the right to ease – or reimpose – restrictions at a different pace based on medical advice among other factors. However, many of the border measures imposed to date appear to be arbitrary and lacking timeframes and review or end dates.

The administration of domestic border controls varies significantly across the country with massive differences in processes for border pass applications, quarantine requirements, and essential worker/ traveller exemptions.

This has caused unintended consequences and exposed Australians to unnecessary risk. It has also significantly impacted on health services, local communities, supply chains, and the ability of businesses to safeguard and create jobs.

Throughout this pandemic we have recognised that the movement of goods and people across the country needs to be risk managed. The sectors represented in this letter have all implemented COVID Safe protocols as well as additional measures to ensure the safety of workers, customers, suppliers and the broader community.

Many of the employers worst hit by the COVID-19 crisis have been forced to apply significant resources to comply with rapidly-changing and variable rules across the nation. This cannot continue unchecked.

A transparent and easily understood set of nationally consistent principles is urgently needed. This would allow states and territories to apply a uniform set of internal border controls in response to outbreaks or changes in conditions.

The decision by National Cabinet to define hotspots is encouraging. We urge Governments to move quickly on this. We need a national framework that clearly sets out the thresholds of when internal border controls can be implemented and how they would apply.

A nationally consistent set of principles across all states and territories would provide greater certainty for business and for all Australians.

Without an agreed framework, enormous harm will continue to be done to critical sectors of our economy, holding back Australia's recovery from this pandemic.

We urge you to take prompt action to resolve these border issues, for all Australians.



Airlines for Australia and New Zealand (A4ANZ)



Australian Airports Association



Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry



Australasian Convenience and Petroleum Marketers Association



Australian Hairdressing Council



Australian Industry Group



Australian Logistics Council



Australian Retailers Association



Australian Tourism Export Council



Australian Tourism Industry Council



Business Council of Australia



Business Events Council of Australia



Business NSW



The South Australian Employers' Chamber of Commerce and Industry



Canberra Business Chamber



Chamber of Minerals and Energy WA



Chamber Of Commerce & Industry Northern Territory



The Chamber of Commerce and Industry is Queensland



The Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Western Australia



Commercial and Asset Finance Brokers Association of Australia



Council of Small Business Organisations Australia



Freight and Logistics Council WA



MGA TMA



National Farmers' Federation



Regional Aviation Association of Australia



The Tasmanian Chamber of Commerce and Industry



Transport & Tourism Forum Australia



The Victorian Chamber of Commerce and Industry