

4 December 2020

## A 2020 View from BIC Chairman – Wayne Patch

The start of 2020 and the Covid-19 crisis certainly presented some significant challenges for Industry. I do not believe that any Association, bus operator or transport government agency had in place an incident management plan for a world-wide pandemic – a pandemic that would very nearly shut-down the entire *moving people* task. Within a matter of days of the pandemic being declared, the BIC was aware of a number of businesses already making decisions to completely close or suspend business. By end March, the federal government had moved Australia into Stage 2 (border closure). Industry and governments went into overdrive all trying to determine ‘the rules’ in this new, almost incomprehensible environment.

I would like to particularly acknowledge the efforts of the Bus Australia Network all working together to assemble informative and state-specific issues and solutions for bus and coach businesses Australia-wide. In those early stages of Covid-19, the task of the Bus Australia Network was enormous when considering that the Australian Government was setting the national emergency response agenda for adoption by the states. Not an easy task to assemble and disseminate a wide perspective of state-centric transport protocols to fit a national approach.

The pace was fast in those early weeks of crisis control and there were significant challenges in keeping up with the rapid changes to the emergency response plans coming from the federal government. The BIC undertook a wide consultation of Industry to ensure that the range of business issues could be accurately and very quickly conveyed to federal and state/territory governments to help them landscape a passenger transport position. The Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications and the Prime Minister and Cabinet worked closely with the BIC to gain insights into the realities of providing covid-safe passenger transport in metro/outer and rural/regional services, school, coach and charter.

On April 2, the BIC also commenced a comprehensive campaign for the bus and coach industry across all levels of government and portfolios for tourism, transport, treasury, employment and small business. Over a period of 3 months, the BIC distributed 6 major Industry Papers to inform governments, the National Covid-19 Coordination Commission and the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry about the Covid-19 crisis impacting bus and coach operations and the manufacture and supply chain. Importantly, these Industry Papers also outlined a suite of stimulus recommendations for Industry and a number of economic recovery programs in which bus and coach operators and the bus manufacture and supply chain could play an active part.

I acknowledge that the LDTCE market has suffered significant losses and many businesses are on the cliff-edge. The BIC has been working with the Tourism Restart Taskforce, appointed by the federal government and administered by the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Many of the issues raised by the BIC and the Bus Australia Network have been taken up in various reports and recommendations provided by the Taskforce to the federal government. A special thank you to Industry's appointed Coach Tourism Taskforce comprised of Paul Crowther, Richard Dawes, Damien Lee and Geoff Vickers. Their tremendous efforts in working with the BIC to provide the case for our coach tourism sector has been invaluable. The BIC will continue to fight hard for this sector.

We are on the approach to the road-out of this covid-crisis. Industry needs to acknowledge that we have in fact weathered this storm so far (some better than others). I believe that we will see emerging markets and new business opportunities to tap into in 2021 and beyond. We need to acknowledge that the businesses in our industry are, in fact, strong and inventive. We are highly skilled as unique providers of automotive vehicles, purveyors of people movement, engineers of safety and high-tech solutions.

### Bus Australia Network



## View from Canberra



I would also like to touch briefly on other matters outside of Covid-19. Through this year, the BIC has also conducted 'business as usual' with the BIC Work Program. Of particular note in the current program, the BIC has ongoing participation in a number of major reviews, including: accessible transport standards, equivalent access, national transport regulatory reform, heavy vehicle national law, road vehicle standards, road safety, heavy vehicle accreditation and heavy vehicle charging. These are all significant reform agendas being undertaken by the federal government and many are tabled for review by the Transport Infrastructure Council in 2021.

The BIC will continue to be diligent in representing the interests of its Members and the whole of Industry in 2021. The BIC Team wishes all of Industry a safe and happy Christmas and New Year.

### Bus Australia Network

