

## Coronavirus: Middle ground ‘a must for border closures’

February 11, 2021

CHARLIE PEEL

JOURNALIST - [@charliepeeled](#)

Queensland tourism industry figurehead Daniel Gschwind says states need to find a middle ground on border closures and reacting to new COVID-19 clusters after sudden lockdowns cost the Queensland industry up to \$20bn last year.

He said state governments needed to agree on a way forward because the status quo, where business and consumer confidence was smashed by sudden restrictions and border closures, was destroying the industry.

Speaking at a Queensland Futures Institute forum, the Queensland Tourism Industry Council head said the way the pandemic was affecting the sector differed greatly based on region and type of business and any substitute to JobKeeper would need to be tailored.

Federal Tourism Minister Dan Tehan has ruled out extending JobKeeper past its March expiry date but he is working with Josh Frydenberg to come up with a replacement support package for the tourism industry.

Mr Gschwind said the Queensland tourism industry was “first in, last out” in terms of the effects of the pandemic. “Our industry relies on the freedom of movement of people and also the operation of crowds and groups being able to come together — that is the essence of our industry,” he said. “Both of those things have been profoundly and comprehensively disrupted and not surprisingly, our industry was completely trashed last year.”

Mr Gschwind estimated the total losses for the industry were between \$10bn and \$20bn, distributed across tens of thousands of businesses that were suffering without income.

The industry was not equally affected throughout the state, with regions that relied on international tourists suffering the most. “We hear stories of operators in the vicinity of Brisbane who have had the best seasons of their life (and) can’t take any more bookings until after Easter,” he said. “Others in the same regions geographically have no business because they normally take international businesses.”

“We have had a really diverse experience.”

Mr Gschwind said consumer confidence was “totally trashed” when it came to travelling and governments needed to follow border closure procedures based on evidence and consideration for health outcomes and the economy.

“It really has sapped the confidence of people booking their trips,” he said. “We need a triage system in place to help businesses find their way out of this.”