

CORONAVIRUS — HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY

Statement

HON COLIN TINCKNELL (South West) [5.35 pm]: I want to represent the hospitality industry, which is a vital industry to not only this state, but also the whole of Australia and the globe. The big thing to remember is that this industry employs a large number of people. Along with the tourism industry, it is one of the biggest employers of people in this state; it is also one of the biggest employers of people in the south west. I want to make some comments to represent that industry to the government and all members of Parliament, and to ask the government to consider working a bit closer with it on the exit strategy post COVID-19, as we work our way out.

The blanket limit of 20 people per venue is a bit of a problem. I understand the health repercussions and why it was done. If there had been better consultation with the industry, there might have been a different set-up, such as allowing it to be a percentage of a venue's capacity or size. It is very important that we work closely with the industry. This industry must comply with many rules and regulations, and it is good at doing that. Hospitality has never been a one-size-fits-all industry. It is very diverse and very different, no matter where one goes. As I will talk about in a minute, there is really no point in massive venues opening if they can have only 20 patrons. Smaller venues will have trouble, too. It will be hard for them to comply with the four-square-metre rule for 20 patrons. We understand the difficulties. I am mainly looking at how we could work better with the larger venues. It is important, because we want these venues to open. The WA Day long weekend is coming up and unfortunately many places will be closed. Western Australians deserve to be able to celebrate the success we have had in working with the authorities to ensure that this state has got through this awful virus very well. We all know that it is not over yet. That is why it is about working with the hospitality industry to make sure that a commonsense approach is taken. We know that a one-size-fits-all approach will not work.

Pubs, clubs and restaurants have had many mechanisms in place to measure the number of people in their venues. They know their clientele. They have Scantek machines. Security companies also have similar phone apps these days. These things could keep track of patrons as they come in. It is just a matter of working with the industry to make sure that we get a better result and get more Western Australians back to work and get the economy working again. That will be important. When we look at the breakdown, what has affected us most? Is it COVID-19 or the devastation of businesses and unemployment and all the problems that come with that unemployment?

I mentioned the south west earlier. There are many venues in that region, such as Bootleg Brewery, Amberley, Cape Mentelle, Leeuwin Estate, Vasse Felix and MadFish Wines; in the great southern, Plantagenet Wines; and in the Swan Valley, Duckstein Brewery, the Feral Brewing Company, Houghton Wines, Mandoon Estate and Sandalford Wines. These are massive outlets and venues. The 20-person rule does not work for them. If we work with them and use a commonsense approach, these businesses could be opened up over the next few weekends and get a lot of people back to work. That will be very important. They are just a few examples. There are thousands of these venues. Some of the wineries down south have seating arrangements outside. They could possibly fit two or three groups of 20 people outside and one or two groups of 20 people inside, while still practicing the proper isolation distancing rules.

The Camfield, next to the football stadium, is one venue that really sticks out. It is capable of holding 2 500 people. It will not open for 20 people. We need to adopt a commonsense approach to work with organisations such as that, for which 20 people would make up less than one per cent of their capacity. We can understand why they would not open up; they would lose a lot of money. There is no point going into business to lose money; the owners would not be in business for long. It is just not economically viable at the moment for many venues to open under the rules and regulations that they have in front of them. People are in business to make money. If they make money and do well, they employ more Western Australians. More Western Australians can then pay their bills and handle any other situation that comes before them, such as ill health or whatever it may be. If these venues could open, it would also just add to the industry. This is an important industry for WA. It is important to the people who work in it and it is important to the people who run those businesses. It is especially important that families in Western Australia, who need to have an income, know that, as we come out of COVID-19, the Premier's exit strategy is dealing closely with the industry and is consulting well to make it the best exit strategy we can have.