

## MARCH 2020 PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Coronavirus is the only thing on everyone's mind in the last month. Last month when I wrote of it I was more concerned with the supply chain impact (as China was in lockdown) than the likelihood of people in our region becoming infected.

Our Executive had a discussion on Monday, and we all agreed to postpone our breakfast program for a month plus cancel our monthly general meeting that was set for this evening. That meeting normally takes place in a board room and it doesn't provide enough social distancing; we have several members in the higher risk category so did not want to run the risk of them becoming infected. Since then I have lost count of the number of events and functions that have been cancelled.

The flow on of such cancellations reaches far into our community. Normally after our meeting 6-10 of us dine at the RSL – we probably spend around \$200 between us. That's less revenue for the RSL and their cook; plus reduces purchases at Micks Vegie Shed, Sharman's, Coles and PFD. The same applies for our breakfast sessions only in greater numbers. Our hospitality industry is going to get hammered similar to the tourism industry, which is in complete disarray.

Is there any good news you ask? State and federal governments are doing their best with stimulus packages and I won't detail all of those aspects, but they are trying very hard to keep business (& jobs) going.

Locally businesses have reported sales down 10-30% so will need special help.

TCCI has established a COVID-19 Business Support hotline – **1300 559-112**

It is available for [any business in Tasmania](#) and provides will access to WHS and legal advisors plus be able to direct you to other support organisations if needed - it is a free service, so I urge you to make use of it if you have any questions or concerns about your business getting through this period. Full details [are here](#)

Federally, the ACCI is lobbying hard for banks to provide some relief for debt holders and to have a no foreclosure policy for twelve months. ACCI is also trying to get energy relief from the major utilities and investigating direct payment of superannuation to staff for three months and even being able to access super in extreme cases plus relaxing IR laws.

The state government issued its support package and has a host of initiatives that will help individuals plus businesses of all sizes. Between the two levels of government there should be cash flooding into the economy and TCCI is running a campaign *Back Tassie Business* and want to spread the [#backtassiebusiness](#) hashtag around the internet. Local spend supports local jobs. I urge everyone to get behind this campaign in all your social media activities – we have to help each other to help ourselves.

The TCCI CEO is meeting with the Premier and ministers each week plus updating us via phone conference every Wednesday and more often when required. He is lobbying for major infrastructure projects to be brought forward – the Bridgewater Bridge and Marinus come to mind.

We all need to modify our behaviour around the virus – social distance has become a “buzzword” overnight. I attended the Burnie City Council meeting last night where councillors and the public were spread out to minimise contact. The 2.5% discount for early payment of rates will remain for this year but there is still a chance that rates may increase. It was a lengthy and heated debate; and from a business perspective I hope there is no rise this year as we are “staring down the barrel” of the coronavirus and do not need more financial stress.

I liked a suggestion I heard this morning – if you don’t want to dine in a restaurant just go and buy a gift voucher and use it when the pandemic is finished – you get a nice meal (eventually) and the restaurant gets cashflow.

We are four weeks into the third *Helping Burnie Work* employability training course. This course is using Ken Dorsey of Workforce Development to deliver the training, and upon successful completion the trainees will have a Certificate III in Business. The calibre of the trainees is very high – if you or a contact is looking for entry level staff please let me know as I am sure we can provide a quality employee for you.

Until next month – please stay safe.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ian".

**Ian Jones**

President

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