

Media Release



Thursday 17 September 2020

PEAK TOURISM BODY DEMANDS REOPENING OF NSW VICTORIA BORDER

Murray Regional Tourism, the peak cross border tourism organisation for the Murray region in NSW and Victoria, demands the NSW Government immediately reopen the NSW Victoria border to regional Victorians to ensure the survival of 1,200 small to medium businesses.

Alarming, the latest update to the NSW Public Health Order means regional Victorian residents living outside the 50 kilometre border region cannot enter NSW including being on the Murray River which is NSW water.

Regional Victoria accounts for approximately 40 per cent of total visitation to the Murray region in NSW and Victoria. Without visitors from regional Victoria, many NSW and water based Victorian businesses will be forced to close and thousands of jobs will be lost.

Representing the 2,500 tourism businesses in the cross border river communities of interest, Murray Regional Tourism is calling for the NSW Government to immediately:

1. Remove the current restrictions on access to the Murray River for regional Victorian visitors.
2. Allow regional Victorian visitors to apply for a border region permit to travel within the border region providing much needed visitation and expenditure into the NSW Murray region business community.

Tourism is the Murray region's second largest employer accounting for approximately 18,000 jobs and contributing over \$2 billion in direct expenditure into the local economy

The NSW Government's most recent announcement to ease border restrictions only permits border region residents to resume daily life across the NSW Victoria border.

Quotes attributable to Murray Regional Tourism Chair, Wendy Greiner

"Immediately reopening the border region to all regional Victorians is critical to the survival of the tourism industry in the Murray region and will do more to help the industry than any business stimulus package."

"Under the current conditions, over a thousand tourism businesses remain largely closed as they cannot welcome regional Victorian visitors to experience a golf holiday, accommodation stay, pub visit, retail experience, paddle steamer cruise or houseboat holiday."

"The Murray region's tourism industry has been decimated by the border closure and reopening the NSW Victoria border to regional Victorian residents plays a crucial role in ensuring regional jobs and economic recovery."

"Our communities of interest in both NSW and Victoria have implored us to advocate for the reopening of the NSW Victoria border in a COVID-Safe manner to ensure their long term future."

Quotes attributable to Murray River Paddlesteamers Director, Craig Burgess

“Regional Victorians, who represent 40 per cent of our business, will not choose to visit the Murray River if it is not open, they will simply choose to holiday elsewhere in Victoria.”

“If the current amendment remains as announced until the border is reopened, which may not be until Christmas, we will miss the September school holiday trade and be forced to cancel all our remaining 2020 popular overnight cruises aboard PS Emmylou as none of these guests come from within the 50 kilometre border bubble”.

“It makes no sense at all and shows a total lack of awareness from NSW Health who are now putting at risk tourism jobs and businesses all along the river in both NSW and Victoria”.

“How can any person boarding a vessel from the Victorian side of the river, enjoying an outdoor cruise along the river and then being returned to the same spot cause a health risk to any NSW resident?”

About Murray Regional Tourism

Murray Regional Tourism works in partnership with Destination New South Wales, Visit Victoria, Destination Riverina Murray, 13 local government areas and several regional tourism organisations, to grow the visitor economy across the Murray region. The Murray region spans 1,700 kilometres of the Murray River from Albury Wodonga to Mildura Wentworth.

Media contact: Donna Russell 0499 500 292 | marketing@mrtb.com.au