

# A One Size Fits All JobKeeper



Touring companies waiting for Australian borders to open face the reality of a bittersweet JobKeeper program extension.

COVID chaos reigns among travellers booked on international tours, and the travel companies that book and create these packages.

Justine Waddington, Founder and Director of Encounter Travel, an award-winning specialist touring company for solo travellers is just one of the hundreds of Australian companies that relies on international touring for their revenue.

She believes there is a stark inequality with JobKeeper payments. There's the same level of support for companies with a 30% or 40% downturn and those with a 100% downturn in sales.

"The magnitude of the chaos and financial hardship unleashed on our industry is unprecedented," said Ms Waddington, owner of the award-winning tour company.

"I have grave fears for the entire touring sector. JobKeeper is geared for businesses that can move into recovery before the end of September, but while the border is closed we'll be in the same place as we are now when we move to the decreased JobKeeper payments."

The company owner said, "We are working as hard as ever (or even harder) and without the staffing and financial resources we need to wade through the processes of 'unbooking' our customers' touring plans."

While other industries may have the option to hibernate, or pivot their business for some incremental sales in the short term, in the world of touring there's no quick fix.

"While we are creating and announcing new (and exciting) local tours, already some of these prospects have been short lived when the Victorian border closed and some travel bans were put in place on Greater Sydney." Ms Waddington said.

The challenge faced by touring companies are the long lead time for their sales. Travellers could be booking a tour as much as a year in advance or longer, which means that when we reach a recovery phase the international touring sector will be the last to return to making money.

"I don't want to take away from the ongoing challenges of many industries but it's time now that our touring industry takes some of the spotlight," Ms Waddington said.

The touring industry is robust and resilient and has weathered storms before but this one is like no other. Waddington said she's committed to seeing this through to the other side.

"There always is a silver lining. For us, it is that by next year we'll have a host of new tours that show off more of Australia, that maybe we'd never have created otherwise," she said.

## About Encounter Travel

Encounter Travel are an award-winning touring company for solo travellers. Since 2006 creating tours and cruise groups for Australian solo travellers to destinations across the globe.

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