

Joyce DiMascio – TTF

Ms DiMascio's presentation covered a number of key issues, including:

- Government and industry preparedness (AMPPI, NTIRP), and the potential impacts of these measures on the tourism industry
- Business continuity planning
- Communication
- Potential roles for the tourism industry in supporting the Government during a pandemic

While AMPPI provides an excellent framework for a whole-of-Government response to an influenza pandemic, a number of the interventions outlined in AMPPI would have serious implications for the tourism industry. Further work (including economic modelling on potential impacts and feasibility) should be done on issues associated with containment such as increased social distance measures, border protection/screening and definitions of essential workers. TTF sought information on the decision making processes for these measures.

Given that the *AMPPI* recognises that individuals may be incubating the disease and have no symptoms, TTF Australia strongly supports the *AMPPI's* recommendation that mathematical modelling is undertaken, and that the costs and benefits of responding to an influenza pandemic are identified. Such modelling and analysis would also make a valuable contribution to business continuity strategies developed by industry.

The NTIRP is a valuable tool for coordinating tourism's response to an incident, but mock simulations and scenario planning exercises were needed. It is essential that those involved were confident in their understanding of the Plan and its protocols and that all parties needed to understood their individual roles and responsibilities

It is vital that Government understands potential impacts of avian influenza on the tourism industry. Detailed information is required for businesses involved in high risk sectors of the industry, particularly transport and accommodation, on issues relating to employers' duty of care, OH&S and staff education on case management. Industry would be able to provide vital support to the Government in containment and management of an outbreak if provided with appropriate information on these issues.

Government needs to develop and implement communication strategies, investigating non-mainstream media (ie websites, emails, mobiles etc) to ensure they reach all stakeholders. There is an urgent need for business continuity and risk management planning, acknowledging that while it is primarily an issue for individual enterprises, they would appreciate any assistance the Government could provide (ie relevant information, frameworks, guides, tools).

It is important that tourism and hospitality employees are not left out of the plan. In many cases these staff will represent the front line in terms of an early response to the detection of a possible outbreak. Some important questions that industry desires answers to are;

- What role their staff will need to play and what protocols they need to adopt in cases where guests/clients present with symptoms?
- What role their venues will play if "isolation policies" are adopted?
- What access their staff will have to antivirals?
- What consideration will be given to defining these staff as part of the "essential services" and provided with more direct access to education resources and also to antivirals?

It is up to the relevant departments to equip tourism and hospitality employees with the necessary training, tools and protection to carry out their responsibilities in a timely and effective manner.

Matt Hingerty – ATEC

Mr Hingerty noted that the consultations were a valuable exercise and that the current version of AMPPI was a vital first step, but that further steps to address industry concerns were required. This is the responsibility of Government and industry, noting that industry will gain the confidence and respect of employees, customers, investors etc if they are actively engaged. In-market reports show that Australia is viewed positively in the world tourism market because of preparedness measures, ie AMPPI. The NTIRP provides a good framework for tourism response, but should be tested regularly.

Many sectors of the industry would be at high risk of exposure to avian influenza and should be adequately prepared. These workers could also provide support to Government in areas such as monitoring, containment in times of heightened pandemic alert/pandemic. Consideration should be given to managing international visitors in Australia and they should be afforded the same medical services given to Australians.

In developing communication strategies, consideration should be given to reaching regional and remote areas, these strategies need to address issues such as information consistency, reporting of misinformation, provision of information for non-health related industries.

Key focus for industry at present should be business continuity measures.

Karl Sullivan – Qantas

Karl advised that businesses should establish a Pandemic Influenza Management Team, responsible for developing response strategies, making and implementing key decisions and overseeing business continuity and recovery. The first issue for this team to consider/determine is the amount of time they expect a crisis (pandemic outbreak) to last. They then need to make appropriate arrangements and develop strategies for maintaining operational liquidity (a firm's centre of gravity) for that period.

Potential strategies to address the 5 critical vulnerabilities affecting operational liquidity include:

1. *Cash flow* – strategies include to adjust operational patterns to match impacts; use opportunities to explore new markets in unaffected areas/markets; and prepare financial hedging plans.
2. *Protect staff and patrons* – strategies include to develop and provide information on enhanced hygiene; execute enhanced building cleaning and sick leave plans; source protective equipment for critical staff (with enough time to train staff on how to use); develop case management protocols; and consider antivirals for critical staff.
3. *Critical suppliers* – strategies include identify **critical** overseas and domestic suppliers; engage with critical suppliers to ascertain whether their business continuity plans will protect you; and where vulnerability is detected, stockpile or seek alternate sources.
4. *Border issues* - manage operations within increased border screening requirements; communicate to staff and customers on potential ramping up of border protection; and overseas/regional managers to provide daily updates on situational changes.
5. *Panic vs confidence* – strategies include develop and execute a comprehensive internal/external communications program. This program should complement the WHO guidelines and include information on the safety work environments; business plans to manage the long term impacts a pandemic; and personal protection guidelines for staff.