

PROTECT

COVID-19: PHASED REOPENING

CONTRIBUTING TO SUSTAINING THE BVI'S ECONOMY / HELPING MITIGATE COVID-19'S ECONOMIC IMPACT

PROTOCOL II: HOSPITALITY SECTOR – RESTAURANTS & CAFÉS

Background.

1. COVID-19 will impact the economy in four basic ways:
 - a. Supply chain failures.
 - b. The direct effects of illness in lost work by those who are sick or tending to the sick.
 - c. The indirect effect of quarantines, travel restrictions¹, restaurant and store closures, and so forth (This has, globally / to date, caused the most harm and triggers the fourth).
 - d. Economies will struggle with demand shocks as businesses fail (in particular less resilient small and medium-sized enterprises (SME)), jobs are lost, household income falls, savings are spent, and public sector revenue shrinks².
2. Economic outlook.
 - a. A very pessimistic forecast suggests a severe recession lasting 12 to 24 months. A very optimistic forecast suggests that a resumption of life as normal by late autumn could be possible.
 - b. Although a more likely outcome lies somewhere in between, the fragility of the Territory's economy, in part given its reliance on tourism and financial services and in part given that recovery from 2017's hurricanes is ongoing, suggests that we should plan on COVID-19 having a very significant negative impact (depth and duration) on the economy. This impact could easily outweigh the direct health impact. Indeed, given the significance of tourism and the hospitality sector, it is likely safe to assume that c. 60% of the Territory's economy is at severe risk.
3. Hospitality Sector. The hospitality sector has already been hit hard by COVID-19 putting associated (direct and indirect) businesses and livelihoods at significant risk. As such, identifying strategies to mitigate COVID-19's economic impact, sustain businesses (livelihoods) and set the conditions for economic recovery is critical and urgent.

Headline

4. GoVI, working with the Safe Tourism Programme Working Group (STP WG) and BVICCHA, endorses a protocol that allows restaurants and cafés to operate safely whilst COVID-19 remains a threat enabling a limited and phased return to work (business) that:
 - a. Protects the BVI (peoples and place);
 - b. Enables approved restaurants and cafés to open their doors;
 - c. Sustains jobs and businesses across the BVI (Direct and Indirect);
 - d. Gives travellers (visitors) confidence that the BVI is a responsible, clean, healthy and safe destination;

¹ The BVI has seen tourism reduce to zero. It is very likely to remain depressed even after COVID-19 fades. This driven by restrictions on travel AND by people having less money to spend and being less willing to spend (impact short to medium-term discretionary spend).

² This will require governments to take difficult decisions.

PROTECT

and

- e. Provides a springboard for the hospitality sector's recovery as COVID-19's impact starts to wane.

Proposal

5. Restaurants and cafés across the Territory that have been approved (i.e. have met the conditions stipulated in a robust / endorsed protocol approved by GoVI) are allowed to operate noting that the protocol (Attachment 1) would protect the Territory (peoples and place) whilst sustaining businesses and livelihoods for economic recovery.

Implementation.

6. Implementation, subject to GoVI approval (timing) would:
 - a. Be phased with identified restaurants initially piloting the proposal (likely for a week) to allow review and, if necessary, refinement ahead of full implementation;
 - b. Be subject to regular reviews to prove the procedure (protocol), and provide confidence that the concept was safe, manageable and appropriate; and
 - c. Protect livelihoods in the Territory by enabling restaurants and cafés to return to work sustaining their businesses (livelihoods) and generating a halo effect for other businesses and the wider economy.

Oversight

7. Given anticipated sensitivities (in particular fear of a resurgence of COVID-19 in the BVI), the protocol would be subject to regular and robust review to ensure effective oversight and mitigate risk. Oversight would be delivered by the Safe Tourism Programme Working Group (STP WG), or an approved sub-committee thereof, working in collaboration with the Social Distancing Task Force (SDTF).
8. In addition to oversight, the STP WG, working with the BVITB and BVICCHA, would assess the programme's need making appropriate recommendations to GoVI (e.g. Advice as to when the programme could be amended, extended or terminated).

Attachment:

1. Hospitality (Restaurants / Cafés) / COVID-19.

HOSPITALITY (RESTAURANTS / CAFÉS) / COVID-19

Headline	A protocol to be enacted in addition to extant legislation, regulations, protocols and procedures to enable restaurants and cafés to operate as part of the Territory’s phased reopening and whilst COVID-19 remains a threat
-----------------	--

1. General.

- a. Restaurants would only be permitted to operate in accordance with (iaw) any extant curfew order¹ or, if there was no active curfew order, their licenced operating hours and extant social distancing protocols².
- b. Approvals granted under the proposal / protocol would be:
 - (1) Held by BVICCHA as the focal point for programme compliance; and
 - (2) Published / available online.
- c. BVICCHA is working with CHTA in their work on a Public / Private Sector effort to establish healthy, clean and safe guidelines and protocols for the industry. Restaurants will be expected to follow these guidelines once endorsed and promulgated.

2. Online (Digital Transformation). Restaurants would offer online reservations^{3,4} and ordering noting that this would:

- a. Enable restaurants to better control seating and numbers;
- b. Support effective COVID-19 tracking and tracing;
- c. Contribute to the Territory’s Digital Transformation; and
- d. Likely make participating restaurants more dependent on pre-set menus.

3. Reservations / Orders.

- a. Until the threat of COVID-19 is assessed as low and medical advice allows this protocol to be relaxed:
 - (1) Restaurants will only be authorised to operate a reservation service noting that reservations (online) would need to be made / confirmed with at least 24 hours’ notice;
 - (2) Walk-in trade (service) would not be allowed in the near-term;
 - (3) The maximum table size would be restricted to 4; and
 - (4) Open Buffets will not be authorised until further notice.
- d. Although a standard table service would be available, patrons would be able to ‘order’ their meals

¹ e.g. At the time of drafting iaw Curfew (no 12) Order, 2020.

² e.g. At the time of writing restaurants would not be permitted to host weddings or parties.

³ The shift to online reservations would need to be supported / enabled by a co-ordinated, comprehensive and enduring comms campaign (likely in part linked to Digital Transformation Programme) led by GIS and amplified / supported by appropriate talking heads, BVITB, BVICCHA and the sector in their advertising and SoMe.

⁴ This could be delivered easily by an app such as Open Table (an app well known around the world / to travellers look for restaurants / dining) and / or work could be initiated to include it within BVI specific Apps such as BVI Now.

PROTECT

online (concurrently with their booking) noting that this would:

- (1) Enhance the restaurant's efficiency and, if managed effectively, reduce overheads / costs;
- (2) Attract a small discount (likely 5%); and
- (3) Reduce customer / staff contact.

3. Patrons.

- a. Patrons would be expected to arrive and leave the restaurant wearing an appropriate face mask noting that this could be removed once seated at their table noting that it would have to be worn when moving around the restaurant (i.e. to visit the restrooms).
- b. The restaurant has the right to exclude (from premises and /or service) any patron who is deemed to breach the protocol.

4. Restaurant Layout. Noting that guidance from the oversight committee / SDTF (in particular for small establishments) may be required, restaurants would be need to:

- a. Provide obvious and accessible hand sanitising stations:
 - (1) At the entrance that patrons must use before entering the premises; and
 - (2) At any serving point for staff to use regularly (i.e. before taking food to a table or going to clear a table).
- b. Ensure that their interior layout enables appropriate social distancing (wider spaces between tables) noting that their layout should be based on evidenced medical advice and accepting that this would likely reduce capacity (covers) whilst the protocol was extant.⁵
- c. The restaurant's layout (including availability of / access to hand sanitisation and washing facilities) must be presented (Dining Area Floor Plan (DAFP)) and approved by the programme's oversight committee before the restaurant is authorised to open noting that this approval could predate GoVI approval for this proposal to be implemented.
- d. The approved DAFP would be held by the focal point for programme compliance (BVICCHA).

5. Restaurant Staff. Restaurant staff (employees) will:

- a. Have their temperature checked and recorded on arrival for work noting that any inspection will likely ask to see the record;
- b. Wear an appropriate / approved face mask at all times;
- c. Wash their hands regularly throughout the service; and
- d. Acknowledge that the duty manager has the explicit right to exclude immediately any employee who is:
 - (1) Identified as suffering from COVID-19;
 - (2) Suspected of suffering from COVID-19; or

⁵ The WHO recommends that the distance from the back of one chair to the back of another chair should be no less than 1m and that guests be 'separated' by at least 1m.

PROTECT

(3) Found in breach of this protocol.

6. **Tables.** In addition to ensuring that tables were appropriately spaced (to support social distancing), cutlery should be wrapped and placed on tables rather than laid out.

7. **Training.** Restaurants must ensure that their staff receives appropriate COVID-19 training (in particular with respect to associated protocols and standards). This must reiterate the need for effective sanitization (personal, tableware and environment). It is anticipated that the SDTF and BVICCHA would be looked to help deliver appropriate training.

8. **Pricing.**

a. It is accepted that this protocol will likely restrict restaurant's covers and therefore revenue. This said:

(1) Restaurants must be encouraged to think of this phase as 'sustainment' rather than 'profit' (i.e. The focus is to sustain the business (cover costs) as a springboard for recovery as the economy recovers and markets return); and

(2) It is anticipated that this may (at least in part) be offset by efficiencies offered by online reservations and ordering.

b. Notwithstanding this, restaurants will be encouraged actively to maintain pre-COVID-19 pricing noting that the programme's oversight committee reserves the right to:

(1) Question price inflation (in particular should it be deemed to appear excessive) reviewing evidence in committee / with the restaurant in attendance ahead of any finding;

(2) Name a restaurant judged to be price gouging; and

(3) Revoke a restaurant's approval to operate where it deems that there is evidence of price gouging.

8. **Oversight.** Given the risk COVID-19 poses effective oversight is essential. As such a public / private sector oversight committee (a sub-committee of the STP WG) is proposed noting that it would have to be effective and agile.⁶ Of note:

a. The Committee would:

(1) Operate (virtually) under an independent chair (nominated by The Premier) and involve representatives from the key stakeholders;

(2) Be required to endorse the initiative and procedures prior to implementation⁷.

(3) Review and note restaurant / café specific operating instructions; and

(4) Following a successful inspection of the resort by the SDTF, authorise the restaurant / café to operate.

b. Stakeholders would be required to:

(1) Review and endorse procedures relevant to them (their organisation);

⁶ Given the extraordinary circumstances (COVID-19) committee members would not be remunerated.

⁷ It is anticipated that Chair would need to (a) propose implementation to The Premier's Office and (b) provide regular updates on the initiative.

PROTECT

- (2) Review regular reporting (including stock-takes) providing timely comment / feedback; and
- (3) Identify appropriate points of contact within their organisations for day-to-day / out of committee communication.

c. It is anticipated that the Oversight Committee would comprise:

Ser	Dept / Organisation	Rmks / Focus
(a)	(b)	(c)
1	Independent Chair	Nominated by The Premier (with casting vote)
2	BVIHSA	Nominated by MoH
3	BVITB	Tourism / Marketing
4	BVICCHA	Stakeholders / Wider economic impact (halo effect)
5	Restaurants / Cafés	Proposed by sector
6	SDTF	Nominated by MoH
7	Secretary	Ex Officio / Programme Manager (possibly found by BVICCHA)