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**VISITOR ECONOMY NEEDS A STEP CHANGE IN SUPPORT AS LOCKDOWN 6.0 EXTENDS**

Premier Daniel Andrews' confirmation today that Lockdown 6.0 will extend beyond 2 September signals a new low for the state's visitor economy businesses and employees.

The State's peak industry body representing the sector, the Victoria Tourism Industry Council (VTIC), says the Victorian Government must look at a significant step change to the structure of its current business support programs.

VTIC CEO, Felicia Mariani, said the industry is preparing a **4-Point Survival Plan** designed to help save a sector that has contributed over \$32 billion to the state's economic position and employed over 260,000 at the start of 2020.

"With our industry, VTIC is crafting a 4-Point Survival Plan that has as its cornerstone a wage subsidy element to be included in any future business support package," Ms Mariani said.

"The industry is deeply appreciative of the \$2 billion that has been delivered already via State and Federal Government collaborative investment since May. These current grant programs, however, are sadly not going to save businesses from closures that now seem imminent.

"VTIC's Survival Plan is calling for a wage subsidy, in line with what has been delivered in the NSW JobSaver Scheme, to be included in the current support structures to provide a survival pathway for many tourism, hospitality and events businesses that are on the verge of collapse."

With another school holiday season now in serious doubt, the Tourism Transport Forum in collaboration with Stafford Strategy released data this week estimating that Victoria will lose \$1.94 billion dollars over the two-week period of the Victorian school holidays. Across Australia, those losses will balloon to nearly \$7 billion.

"Businesses in the visitor economy right across the state are struggling under the weight of this latest lockdown and hope is waning that they will ever recover from mounting losses," Ms Mariani said.

"The industry needs a roadmap through this nightmare; some certainty that they can hang on to. We must see a change to the current business support structure that delivers a critical wage subsidy scheme to augment the grant programs.

"Our 4-Point Survival Plan also calls for a dedicated program targeting the tourism, hospitality and events industry with support beyond the date when Lockdown 6.0 actually ends.

"We've seen time and time again now that our industry will continue to face residual restrictions that will impede business operations and challenge our viable reactivation after the lockdown. Future support packages must acknowledge this, and provide ongoing support to our sector until we can escalate our operations to the pace and scale of other industries."

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