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COVID-19 - key questions asked by Tasmanian wine producers...

As the situation continues to change, the best reference is www.business.tas.gov.au. Wine Tasmania's website will continue to be updated.

If you have questions at any time, please get in touch with Sheralee (0407 004 959), Paul (0414 980 798) or Allison (0409 285 100) at Wine Tasmania. If we don't have the answers, we'll chase them up.

Here are some of the key questions we've been asked:

What do the easing of restrictions mean for me?

Currently, cellar doors can open for up to 250 indoors and 1,000 outdoors (outdoor gatherings increased from 25 September 2020), subject to capacity for social distancing. Density required is 2m² per person, so you can have as many as your venue can accommodate.

At this stage, **alcoholic beverage service still needs to be seated**.

COVID-19 Work Safety Plans

All businesses need to have a COVID-19 Work Safety Plan in place to protect staff and customers, and available for public health inspectors. The Tasmanian Government has provided some further information on minimum standards, templates and a checklist to help businesses develop a plan and procedures - available [here](#).

National guidelines for wine tastings and onsite wine consumption (ie not having to be accompanied by food) are available [here](#) - these are best practice national guidelines and need to be read in conjunction with State Government regulation (**noting food and alcoholic beverage service in Tasmania currently needs to be seated**). Guidelines for cafes / restaurants / food are available [here](#), information from Liquor Licensing [here](#), including [FAQs for liquor license holders](#).

Can I offer wine tastings?

Yes, you can (from 3pm on Friday 5 June) offer **seated service** of wine / alcohol, including tastings, by the glass and by the bottle. There are additional considerations associated with tastings, including disposable spittoons, not reusing glasses, disposable tastings notes (etc) - please view the national cellar door guidelines [here](#), **which need to be read in conjunction with State Government laws and requirements - noting that in Tasmania alcohol service currently has to be seated**. You might like to consider offering wine tastings as a wine 'flight', served at the table and / or to require guests to book in advance. The national cellar door guidelines are best practice - it is up to you to identify and manage risks within your own workplace, and to reflect this in your individual Covid-19 Safe Workplace Plan.

Do I need to capture contact details?

It is strongly recommended, where possible, to assist with any contact tracing that may be required. Refer to the following information:

- Tasmanian Government Safe Workplaces minimum standards: *Any workplace records that would assist with notifying people who enter/leave the workplace of any potential exposure to COVID-19 must be kept for at least 21 days.*
- Hospitality Safe Workplace Guidelines: *To help contact tracing: If possible you should put in place a process to enable workers, and other visitors to your workplace to sign in and out when they attend the workplace. This may be difficult or not reasonably practicable to put in place for customers / clients, especially in the case of larger businesses. Smaller businesses, such as those providing personal services, should keep an appointment book. This will help trace customers/clients if there is a COVID-19 exposure in the workplace.*

What assistance is available to me?

Both the Australian and Tasmanian Governments have announced a series of support measures for businesses and individuals. The exact support available to you will depend on your circumstances and business model.

- **Tasmanian Government support:** view www.business.tas.gov.au or phone 1800 440 026 for further details and sign up for the regular updates [here](#)
- **Australian Government support:** view www.business.gov.au for further details and updates.

What are the implications for my work place?

It is critical that you understand and implement social distancing and staff wellbeing / hygiene measures to ensure this continues, protect your workers and the broader community. The Australian Wine Research Institute (AWRI) has provided details on winery sanitisation [here](#) and Australian Grape & Wine has further resources and detailed guidelines [here](#). You also need to have a COVID-19 Worksafe Plan in place, as mentioned above.

How can I best protect and support staff and customers?

Understand and practice the social distancing and staff wellbeing / hygiene measures to minimise risks to your staff, customers and the broader community.

These are trying times and understanding the stress on yourself and staff is important. Lifeline Tasmania has set up a new service for Tasmanians, specifically to deal with unprecedented demand for information, advice and support because of the coronavirus pandemic. Lifeline's 13 11 14 crisis line continues to be available for those with significant and ongoing mental health issues, including those having suicidal thoughts. The new line will deal with the many issues around what is called psychological stress.

The Mental Health Council of Tasmania stresses that psychological distress is not a mental illness. It is a normal human response to a situation that is frightening, confusing or upsetting. Research studies indicate that most people will experience some level of psychological distress during a pandemic. For most people this will ease over time and does not lead to mental illness. Being in 'psychological distress' means that a person feels unhappy, anxious, worried, angry, sad, scared or grief-stricken.

For many Tasmanians 1800 98 44 34 – A Tasmanian lifeline is a service they might never have contemplated having to access in normal times. These are not normal times. Many Tasmanians experiencing stress, anxiety, worry, fear and a sense of helplessness because of the pandemic are strongly encouraged to seek assistance by calling this new Lifeline Tasmania service.

The new Lifeline Tasmania service will provide information on the resources available to support those impacted by the unprecedented changes in the way Tasmanians go about their daily lives, including social isolation, loss of employment, the impact on mental health, the financial challenges and, in the case of health professionals, working in a high-risk environment.

Staffed from 8am to 8pm, seven days a week, the new service will offer three types of support:

- Call in: Tasmanians will receive psychosocial support from a trained support worker to discuss concerns and be redirected where appropriate to a referral service.
- Call out: Contact socially isolated older Tasmanians identified through existing services, family and friends who are concerned or by other health professionals.
- Reach out: Through partnership with those industries significantly impacted, such as tourism, hospitality, retail identify at-risk members and reach out for psychosocial support, counselling or employee assistance programs.

What if I have to lay off staff or need to reduce their hours?

It is really important to seek professional workplace relations advice and make sure you understand your obligations and options before making changes to staff arrangements. There has been some flexibility added to employment awards during COVID-19 - view the Fair Work Australia website [here](#).

The TCCI has been funded to offer free workplace relations support for businesses impacted by COVID-19 - phone 1300 559 112.

I have issued invoices that remain unpaid, sometimes in situations where wine has already been received by the customer, and possibly even on-sold. How can I ensure / chase payment?

This is a tricky one. We know that wine producers are often asked to accept lengthy credit terms by wholesale customers. We also know that many of our wholesale customers are experiencing significant financial pressure of their own. In recognition of these challenging financial times, legal requirements around insolvency and payment of debts have been relaxed.

Wine Tasmania Brand Showcase Member, Finlaysons, has provided a Legal Alert on implications of these changes, noting that it may result in “an informal moratorium on payment of debts for six months” - view [here](#). Finlaysons has also provided a Legal Alert on how you can protect yourself if you have provided goods or services on credit - view [here](#).

Where can I get further information?

See links below for official Government information and advice, including additional assistance available from the Tasmanian and Australian Governments. Please call Sheralee (0407 004 959), Paul (0414 980 798) or Allison (0409 285 100) at Wine Tasmania at any time.

Key links:

- [Business Tasmania](#) - dedicated resource for Tasmanian businesses (sign up for the regular updates [here](#))
- [Australian Government information](#) - official information on COVID-19 and resources
- [Tasmanian Government information](#) - official information on COVID-19 and resources
- [Tourism Tasmania](#) - information for businesses with cellar doors or visitor offerings (if you don't already receive the Tourism Tasmania newsletter and updates, you can subscribe [here](#))
- [Australian Grape & Wine](#) - information and resources from the national wine body