

WINE TASMANIA

Last updated 24 June 2020, 2.00pm EST

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

As we've been talking with members, a few common questions have come up. We've included these with responses below to make it a bit easier to navigate all the information coming out. We'll also try to highlight the key assistance measures most likely to be relevant to Tasmanian wine businesses.

If you have any other questions, 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?

On 26 June, the Tasmanian Premier announced the earlier implementation of stage 3 restrictions from noon on Friday 26 June, allowing up to 250 people to gather indoors (per area, if a venue has multiple rooms or areas) and up to 500 people to gather outdoors. Venue limits are based on their capacity, with reduced density also announced, requiring 2m² per person to be required (down from 4m² previously required). At this stage, food and beverage service still needs to be seated.

This follows earlier announcements by the Tasmanian Premier on stages 1, 2 and 3 restrictions. Below is our understanding of these conditions, all of which are subject to change based on health advice and further Government announcements.

- **From Monday 18 May (Stage 1)** - only restaurants / cafes (including within cellar doors) able to open, for 10 people at a time, with table service only, for food service (accompanied by wine), no tastings permitted and with social distancing (4m² per person) - see [guidelines here](#), information from Liquor Licensing [here](#), including [FAQs for liquor license holders](#). Takeaway bottled wine sales permitted from all cellar doors. You will also need to have a COVID-19 Work Safety Plan in place (see further details below).
- **From 3pm on Friday 5 June (earlier implementation of Stages 2&3)** - all cellar doors can reopen for seated food and / or drinks-only service (wine tastings / by the glass or bottle) for up to 40 people, subject to social distancing, and with a COVID-19 Work Safety Plan in place (see further details below). Further details and FAQs [available here](#). Please also familiarise yourself with the national cellar door protocols [here](#), noting that cellar doors in Tasmania are only permitted to offer seated tastings / drinks service at this point in time.
- **From noon on Wednesday 17 June (earlier implementation of Stages 2&3)** - cellar doors can open as above, but for up to 80 people, subject to capacity for social distancing.
- **From noon on Friday 25 June (earlier implementation of Stage 3)** - cellar doors can open as above, but for up to 250 indoors and 500 outdoors, subject to capacity for social distancing, with density required reduced to 2m² per person. At this stage, food and 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](#) (**noting food and beverage service in Tasmania 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 is permitted, 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](#), also noting that in Tasmania service has to be seated and with the appropriate social distancing and hygiene.

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.

Do I need to capture contact details?

Yes. It is a requirement that you obtain details of guests, so that any potential future virus outbreak can be traced. GuestHQ is one service that can be considered, and [is offering the first 6,000 check-ins free, after which \\$9.99/month would be payable, no contract or fixed terms](#). This is just one such service that has proactively been in touch, but there are other similar services, and Wine Tasmania does not have an affiliation with or specifically promote one single provider.

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, but we have highlighted below the key initiatives likely to be of support to wine businesses.

- **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](#)):
 - **NOW CLOSED (4 May 2020): Small Business Emergency Support Grant** - open to Tasmanian small businesses (including sole traders) experiencing hardship in specific sectors (tourism/hospitality extends to wine) - one-off emergency payments of \$2,500 available.
 - **NOW CLOSED (4 May 2020): Small Business Hardship Grant** - additional grants of \$15,000 for businesses in the sectors listed above.
 - **NOW CLOSED: Interest Free Business Loans** - available to hospitality, tourism, seafood and export businesses with a turnover of less than \$5 million to purchase equipment or restructure business operations, interest free for three years.

- **NOW CLOSED: Business Continuity Grants** - one-off grants of up to \$750 to support Tasmanian businesses engaging the services of a suitably qualified person to advise on business continuity planning.
- **Government fees frozen, waived and capped** - water and electricity bills waived for first quarterly bill after 1 April for small businesses on Tariffs 22, 94, 88 or 75, electricity bills capped and water bills frozen for 2020/21.
- **Business Vehicle Registration Relief** - view further details [here](#).
- **Liquor License Fees** - 50% discount on liquor licencing fees and application fees waived for 2020, back dated to 1 January 2020.
- **Payroll Tax** - reduction for hospitality, tourism and seafood for 2019/20.
- **Workplace Advice** - the Tasmanian Chamber of Commerce & Industry (TCCI) has been funded to offer free workplace relations support - phone 1300 559 112, and view information on its website [here](#).
- **Financial Advice** - through Tasmanian Government support, the Tourism Industry Council Tasmania (TICT) has been funded to offer a free consultation service for tourism operators with an experienced financial advisor. Please contact info@tict.com.au for more information. The TICT has also released a podcast series discussing the impact of COVID-19 and support available for tourism businesses - access [here](#).
- **Digital Ready Program** - the Tasmanian Government has provided additional funding for this program, which provides free, personalised coaching for businesses to maximise their online presence and results. Further details [here](#).

Australian Government support (view www.business.gov.au for further details and updates):

- **NOW CLOSED: JobKeeper Payments** - further details and enrolment through the ATO at www.ato.gov.au/General/JobKeeper-Payment/ - this support is available for employees, as well as sole traders and partnerships, if eligibility is met.
- **Boosting Cash Flow for Employers** - businesses with annual turnover under \$50 million and that employ workers are eligible for a payment of \$20-100,000 equal to the amount of tax withheld. It is a tax-free payment to employers, automatically calculated and credited by the ATO. Further details [here](#).
- **Increased Asset Write-off** - instant asset write-off threshold increased from \$30,000 to \$150,000.
- **Accelerated Depreciation** - businesses will be able to deduct 50 per cent of the cost of an eligible asset on installation.
- **Tax Relief** - relief for some business tax obligations - further details [here](#).
- **Banking support / guarantees** - the Government will provide a guarantee of 50% for new unsecured loans to be used for working capital. Further details [here](#).

Your bank may also be offering additional relief for businesses impacted by COVID-19. Wine Tasmania's Partner, **NAB**, has advised it is offering deferred principal and interest, cutting rates on new loans and deferring business credit card repayments. Please contact Lee Campbell at NAB for further details and with any questions - Lee.X.Campbell@nab.com.au, 0428 579 852.

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