

Central Western Queensland Welcomes COVID-19 Restriction Roll Back

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An outback economic development body has welcomed the State Government's staged wind back of COVID-19 restrictions.

The Remote Area Planning and Development Board, which is made up of the seven local government areas of the central west, congratulates the Premier Anastacia Palaszczuk for releasing a stepped process for getting Queensland's economy moving while keeping the community safe.

"RAPAD is grateful to the Premier for this roadmap particularly the government's willingness to listen to the needs of western Queensland and design a process which acknowledges the regions unique situation and adapts accordingly," RAPAD Chair Tony Rayner said.

From this weekend residents of the outback can dine in restaurants, pubs and clubs with a maximum of 20 people and can drive up to five hundred kilometres.

By the 12th of June travel anywhere in the outback for outback residents will be allowed and restaurants, pubs and clubs can welcome 50 local guests at a time.

By the 10th of July interstate and intrastate travel will be allowed and maximum number of people in a venue will be 100.

"This relaxing of restrictions during our western Queensland tourist season will be critical for the region's economy, a RAPAD commissioned report released in February shows that the tourism spend in the central west is in excess of half a billion dollars every year," Councillor Rayner said.

"In order for this plan to be delivered the community needs to take diligent action on social distancing, hand washing and hygiene and follow all advice from the state's Chief Health Officer," he said.

"Again we thank the Premier for listening to and considering the RAPAD region, and we look forward to further working together to see our community and our economy safely out of this pandemic," he said.

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Now we must turn our attention to the road map for economic recovery and RAPAD has released several media statements calling for a western Queensland recovery package and stimulus package.

The stimulus package includes:

- Increased funding for community infrastructure programs such as the successful Works for Queensland program
- Increased funding for economic infrastructure, especially targeted at boosting investment in the regional road network
- A support package to assist outback tourism operators who - coming off the back of their offseason - will miss their critical peak season and are unlikely to generate any significant turnover until winter 2021
- Investment in promoting the Outback as a tourism destination when the pandemic passes to counter the State closing its borders
- Increased funding for skills development, financial counselling and other training programs
- Increased funding for economic development initiatives related to new business models associated with the digital economy and entrepreneurship.

"Our tourism sector needs financial assistance to return to full operation, even with unrestricted travel the reduced numbers in venues will hinder the of profitability for some larger operators," Tony Rayner said.

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