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Tourism gets roadmap to better times

BUSINESS LEADERS INSIST PALASZCZUK'S FIRM DATES CAN GIVE VISITORS CONFIDENCE TO BOOK

CAIRNS tourism and business leaders responded with relief after Premier Anastacia Palaszczuk set out her plan to have Queenslanders reunited with their families before Christmas.



Ms Palaszczuk's plan to allow fully-vaccinated travellers to enter the Sunshine State without having to quarantine was welcomed by Cairns business leaders.

When the state reaches the 70 per cent fully vaccinated mark, anyone who has been in a declared hotspot in the previous 14 days can travel into Queensland provided they are fully vaccinated, arrive by air, have a negative Covid test in the previous 72 hours and undertake home quarantine for 14 days.

Restrictions ease further at 80 per cent vaccination level but the Premier warned that a big outbreak in a regional community that did not have high vaccination rates could force them into a lockdown still.

Cairns Airport chief executive Richard Barker said the Premier's announcement of a clear road map was fantastic news for the region.

'We're really thrilled the Queensland government has announced a clear timetable for the reopening of Queensland today,' he said.

"That's great news for the state and for the Tropical North.

"As a community we need to really strive to ensure jobs and livelihoods are maintained in the lead-up to Christmas, and vaccination is key to that."

Tourism Tropical North Queensland (TTNQ) bosses have welcomed the announcement and to finally have a sense of certainty.

TTNQ chairman Dr Ken Chapman said: "It's great to finally have a date, December 17 we are open for business.

"It is going to give people the confidence to book again.

"I think that a hard date was what was needed. That is what we have been calling for and they delivered."

TTNQ chief executive officer Mark Olsen said: "This will give confidence to consumers and a compelling reason for the community to be vaccinated."

Cairns Chamber of Commerce chief executive Patricia O'Neill said local businesses would now have more certainty.

"Finally, we have some clarity in terms of businesses being able to plan as well as people being able to reunite with their families," she said.

"Rather than being an isolated state we can wrap our arms around each other, shake hands over business and be a nation once again."

But Big Fish Down Under charter operator Daniel McCarthy said the reopening dates wouldn't help his business.

"This news is about 18 months too late, as 95 per cent of our marlin fishing clients are international," he said.

"By December the season is pretty much over. Our marlin fishing industry of 25 to 30 would traditionally bring \$50 million into the Cairns economy every year.

"Now we are bringing in zero with the border shut."

Mr McCarthy who said he was unvaccinated, said the Premier's vaccination targets were "an unachievable goal".

Barron River MP Craig Crawford said anyone thinking about getting vaccinated needs to stop shillyshallying.

"We have around eight weeks until we have tourists arriving from the southern states, which is a good thing, but the Delta variant will be on the first plane here," he said.

"Waiting until early December is too late," he said,

"The best way we can defend Cairns and ensure it stays open for business is to ensure we have a high vaccination rate."

Cairns MP Michael Healy said he encouraged everybody who had not been vaccinated yet to please do it.

"I want to let everyone in our community know that this is going to be determined by our vaccine levels," he said.



"I got off the phone with the Premier, Treasurer and Chief Health Officer and we realise there are people at risk and everybody needs to have the ability to get vaccinated and we will give them this opportunity."

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