

A TIME TO BAND TOGETHER

It is fair to say that few would have anticipated the COVID-19 virus and its devastating effect

The speed and scale of the economic and social impact of this virus is unprecedented in our lifetime and no person or business anywhere in the world is being spared.

This has created a situation where we are all having to make important decisions about our businesses, employees and customers in an environment where there are more unknowns than knowns.

This in turn is creating fear, doubt and uncertainty. In short, there is no playbook for what we are all experiencing both professionally and personally.

It can be hard to come to terms with the fact that much of this crisis is outside our control, however, *“while we can’t control the Coronavirus crisis, we can control how we respond to it.”*

With that in mind, the AAAA’s role is to support our members, and I can assure you we will be there with you every step of the way, as we navigate through these difficult times and out the other side. We are working hard on a number of fronts to support our members and the broader industry.

With a fast-evolving situation, getting timely and accurate information can be challenging. Our sole focus as an association is to ensure we are doing exactly that. Being armed with the right information will assist you in making good decisions that will stand the test of time, while our member services can help cushion the impact on your business.

Understandably the important questions being asked by our members are around if automotive is deemed an essential service, issues pertaining to employee leave, and what Government assistance is being offered to our industry.

We are utilising all of our communication channels to regularly communicate on these issues and more, relating to the crisis. We are frequently sending emails to the AAAA membership, posting on social media, updating our website news section and providing more detailed information in this magazine.

We have a dedicated section setup on our Members Portal with information and documents that apply specifically to automotive businesses. We encourage you to check in on your preferred communication channels regularly to ensure you receive the most up to date information – simply head to www.aaaa.com.au for all Coronavirus resources.

We also recently hosted our first ever member webinar, in an effort to provide a direct, timely and interactive communication medium for our members. The webinar was titled “Coronavirus - Workplace Update For Employers” and it was a

huge success, with more than 500 registrations. It is now available for watching at any time on our above-mentioned Members Portal.

Given the positive feedback, we will be incorporating webinars into our repertoire of communication channels moving forward to ensure we are satisfying the needs of our members, particularly in this challenging time.

Our free, dedicated Human Resource/Industrial Relations and Legal Hotlines available to members have also been inundated with queries and support requests. During these times, the value of this service to members has been immeasurable and we encourage any member that has specific questions to get in contact with Industry Legal Group by phoning 1300 735 306. We are very grateful for their tireless work during this time.

As we go to print, the Australian Government has just announced a \$130 Billion stimulus package. A key feature of the package is the “JobKeeper” wage subsidy scheme which will give eligible businesses up to \$1,500 per fortnight per employee, to keep people connected to their workplaces, even if a business has to go into a temporary shutdown or ‘hibernation.’

This stimulus package will offer up to six months’ respite for businesses that have faced a downturn of 30 percent or more relative to a comparable period a year ago. Although this is not a ‘silver bullet’, we certainly believe this will make a real difference to the businesses in our industry and our hard-working employees across Australia. It will go a long way to helping the auto aftermarket industry keep Australia moving.

I am heartened by the way people have come together across the world to assist in this crisis. The challenges of Coronavirus have generated outstanding displays of innovation, collaboration and value-driven acts of kindness and compassion.

The automotive industry has certainly been a part of this ‘silver lining’ of the crisis and is well positioned to provide support, expertise and manufacturing capability to support our hospitals and emergency service workers. They are under resourced and lacking the sheer quantity of medical equipment and PPE required to handle the significant increase in load on our healthcare system, so the automotive industry is chipping in to do what it can.

From Formula One and V8 Supercars through to local aftermarket businesses and even our own Auto Innovation Centre (AIC), efforts are being made to leverage our engineering skills and manufacturing capability to produce medical



equipment and parts that are in dire need across the country and world. It is a testament to the human spirit and a bright candle of hope during these difficult times.

In what seems like a decision made a lifetime ago, given what has transpired over the last couple of weeks, on the 17th of March we made the call to postpone Autocare 2020. It was a difficult move, however absolutely the right decision given the situation. Autocare will now be held across the 30th and 31st of October and remains at the Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre. The event will continue to provide industry-leading speakers and exhibitors, offering a not to be missed, education and training led convention.

We also want to assure you that our association is in a strong position to continue to support you through these unprecedented times. The AAAA team is working remotely with no impact to our day-to-day operations and our talented team remain 100 percent committed to doing everything we can to support you at the time you need us most.

Although it might not feel that way right now, I do firmly believe that if we keep positive, listen to the direction of the authorities and stay resilient, we will rise to this challenge and come out stronger on the other side.

We will pick up the pieces, reflect on what we have learned and in true Aussie spirit, get on with doing what we do best.

Please take care and I wish you and your families all the best.

MARK PEDDER
Chairman

STUART CHARITY
Chief Executive Officer