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Green light for restart of Victoria's cultural attractions a positive step forward, but still a long road ahead to restore business confidence

This morning's announcement by Minister for Creative Industries Martin Foley, that some of Victoria's most iconic cultural attractions will reopen their doors in time for the winter school holidays, is a positive step forward for the state's hard-hit tourism sector, according to the Victoria Tourism Industry Council (VTIC).

From Saturday 27 June, the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne Museum, Scienceworks, State Library Victoria and parts of Arts Centre Melbourne, will be back in business and officially open again to the public.

VTIC Chief Executive Felicia Mariani said, "While today marked the easing of restrictions under strict guidelines for many entertainment and cultural venues across the state, Melbourne's key cultural institutions have largely remained closed.

"While the virtual experiences offered by these attractions have been thoroughly enjoyed by many, it's exciting to know that we can get back to exploring these fascinating places to their full potential.

"The reanimation of these iconic Melbourne venues provides all members of our community, in particular our students, with the opportunity to experience our city's fantastic attractions which were closed last school holidays.

"Today's announcement also boosts the state's offering to the domestic travel market, providing further compelling reasons to visit Melbourne and indeed Victoria," Ms Mariani said.

Victoria's visitor economy, previously worth \$31 billion and responsible for employing over 232,000 people, has greatly suffered during this pandemic. In a recent VTIC member survey, 42 per cent of tourism industry respondents indicated that they are not confident that they will be operating again in three months' time.

"While we have a long road ahead in repairing our previously thriving and lauded industry, VTIC is encouraged to see these much-loved cultural attractions scheduled for re-opening, providing surrounding small businesses with an opportunity to make it through to the other side of this devastating crisis.

"From the beginning of the Coronavirus pandemic, VTIC has, and will continue to engage extensively with our members and all levels of government, to ensure we have the most considered and effective roadmap to recovery in place.

"We were encouraged to see last night's release of the Victorian Government's Tourism Industry Guidelines for COVID-19, and we urge all members of the sector to be across these so we can continue to move forward and ensure more businesses, like we have seen today, can be given the green light to restart and welcome customers back," Ms Mariani concluded.

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