



LION ROARS
HOTELS & LODGES

01-07-2020

Hi Pride

A cold, wet July approaches and the “paint by numbers” game continues. “Advanced level 3” has been declared, but gives little respite and has not been particularly well thought out. Without interprovincial travel, lack of clarity on leisure accommodation and alcohol restrictions, the hospitality industry remains very constrained. While, perhaps well intentioned, this sub-level of lockdown brings little real relief to our sector of the economy.

A time of crisis demonstrates how important it is to have knowledgeable, qualified people in positions of leadership. Appointing people without in-depth knowledge for political purposes is a short sighted move. Sadly, our Tourism Minister appears ill-equipped for the task at hand and has not shown the leadership nor an understanding of the industry mechanics needed in these difficult times. Oh, Mr Hanekom, we miss you so much.

The month has brought some unexpected discoveries. The Pretoria High Court ruled the lockdown unconstitutional, but it doesn't matter because government didn't like the ruling so, out of respect, we're all going to ignore it. Interestingly, decisions don't have to be appropriate to remain rational, another court tells us. At the beginning of lockdown it was proudly hailed that all decisions were being made by the NCCC. A “command council” with an apparently decisive, military and authoritarian approach. This is perhaps good for fast tracking decisions and making decrees, but very problematic in observing democracy and safeguarding our wonderful constitution. We now are told that the NCCC is only an advisory panel and makes polite suggestions to Cabinet. This is more than a little unbelievable, but at least it shows that leadership has taken notice of the dangers of overreaching on civil liberties, albeit somewhat belatedly.

Having said that, politicians are being politicians across the globe, applying their highly-trained bureaucratic minds, honed from many years of committee meetings, to micromanage the virus, revelling in their newly found purpose and power. Perhaps it would be more effective to let businessmen make decisions for the economy, medical experts manage the virus and normal people manage their own health risks, precautions and behaviours, while giving clear guidelines and transparent information?

We can still be proud that in South Africa the voice of dissent and disagreement is alive and well and freely expressed (even if apparently ignored.) We tend to be very binary creatures - right or wrong, good or evil. But this is a grey world, especially clouded in the fog of a global virus. Let's keep the debate robust, but ultimately remember the proverbial” play the ball not the man”. I don't mean political correctness. Im not a fan of that. I mean put the issues out there, with a little humour and a lot of humility, but let's not slip into the divisive. We are one nation and we stand against this challenge together.

It has also been a month of deep sadness. Of sleepless nights, dwelling on gut wrenching, difficult choices. Our Management team's objective from the start, has been to keep the ship afloat. I believe we will succeed in this. To do this, though, we have had to make the very difficult decision to permanently close regional offices, and some operations to further cut costs and this will result in some permanent retrenchments. We are stuck. With the failure of TERS to deliver on time, if at all; the achingly slow reopening of the economy and thus no meaningful revenue and a slow recovery ahead of us, we have no choice in these actions. If we don't take them, the whole ship will sink,

everybody will go down and all jobs will be lost. I am deeply sad about the impact on the Pride members this affects. We've done every last thing possible to avoid it but at this point there's no other option for us.

It has been some consolation to have been able to provide several hundred food vouchers and acquire a hundred food parcels at a great price from the Solidarity Fund through the Lion Roars Foundation. It is not enough, but at least we have been able to take action and make a small difference.

Small victories will be of great importance in the months ahead. Never will guests be so welcome to take refuge under our various thatched, canvas or tin, very well sanitized roofs. It will only be a trickle at first, but this is how all mighty rivers begin.

The recovery has begun, but it's still a long road back. Let's find our inner strength to battle through with courage, determination, humour and kindness.

All the best,
Kevin