

AusCham Vietnam Mid-Term Report

The 2020/21 Board of AusCham Vietnam was elected on 31 March 2020. We are proud to report back to members and friends on all the significant initiatives we have achieved over the last six challenging months. The election of the Board was conducted at our first virtual Annual General Meeting which sets the scene for the new normal at the height of Covid-19 pandemic. This was following a horror start to the year in Australia caused by the devastating bushfires. AusCham will not forget the charity of the Australian community in Vietnam who banded together and raised over AUD140,000 to support the rebuilding of affected areas.

The Covid-19 Challenge

We were not fazed by the challenge of Covid-19. We wanted to make sure that members were safe, healthy and well informed.

- **EQuest Asia** through My Holland delivered a webinar on coping strategies to improve mental resilience during lockdown.
- **TUI Blue Hoi An** resort's personal trainer gave several online fitness classes as part of our Get Fit for Work program.
- **KPMG Vietnam** provided a timely webinar on the tax incentives provided by the Vietnamese Government for businesses that suffered as a result of Covid-19.
- **Robyn Mudie, Australian Ambassador** held a townhall meeting with AusCham members on the Australian Government's response and strategy for Covid-19.

Recognising the economic impacts of Covid-19 on our members, the AusCham Board decided to give a 10% discount on membership fees for 2020 to our existing members. This amount may not be much, but we wanted to show that we are standing by members during this difficult time.

AusCham ASEAN

This year Vietnam is Chair of ASEAN. As is protocol, AusCham Vietnam took on the Presidency of AusCham ASEAN. Chau Ta, our director was elected President of AusCham ASEAN. In her role as President, AusCham ASEAN Chau presented alongside His Excellency Simon Birmingham, Australian Trade Minister on the Australian Business in ASEAN Survey for 2020 which looked at the Covid-19 impacts of Australian businesses in ASEAN.

Business Briefings

Our business briefings have delivered timely and informative discussions on a range of business issues.

- **Tourism Sector Ideas for Growth** – we brought together leading and influential industry leaders to provide an insight on how to grow tourism business during Covid-19. These leaders included Ken Atkinson and Tran Trong Kien who are Co-Chair of the Tourism Advisory Group.
- **Competition Law** – Dr Tuan Nguyen of LNT & Partners sponsored a briefing on the competition law impacts on M&A transactions. Tiong Hooi Ong of PwC provided a market update on M&A transactions.
- **Labour Law, Work Permit and Residency** – Matthew Lourey of Domicile Corporate Services and Minh Duong of Asia Counsel gave a webinar on the changes to labour and immigration laws.

AusCham Chats

There has been a cult-like following to our monthly AusCham Chats which is an informal fireside breakfast chat in partnership with the LIN Centre. All monies raised from attendance fees goes to LIN, a charity. AusCham Chats have covered many interesting topics including: women in leadership, empower and develop local leadership – lessons learned from foreign businesses and communicating effectively through the current crisis.

Advocacy

We have advocated for members on a range of issues at various forums.

- **Business Travel** – we wrote to the Australian and Vietnamese governments to present a survey of our members on the impact of travel restrictions. Many of our members have been stranded outside of Vietnam since international border closures even though they work and reside in Vietnam. Recently, we have been working hard to bring back to Vietnam many of our members on a charter flight organised by RMIT, our Gold Sponsor.
- **Australia – Vietnam Travel Bubble** – we wrote to the Australian and Vietnamese governments to consider an Australian and Vietnam travel bubble as the two countries, in particular Vietnam, have done very well in fighting Covid-19. Matt Young our Secretary appeared on Channel Seven Sunrise program pushing for this initiative earlier in the year.
- **New PPP Law** – through the leadership of our Director, Melissa Keane who is a partner of the law firm Allens, AusCham presented a submission to the National Assembly of Vietnam recommending changes to the new Law on Public Private Partnerships.
- **Labour Regulations** – Brian O'Reilly through his involvement in the Vietnam Business Forum co-wrote a submission on the proposed changes to Vietnam's labour regulations.
- **Australia Vietnam Enhanced Economic Engagement Strategy** – the Australian Government invited AusCham Vietnam to present a submission on the economic engagement strategy between Australia and Vietnam. Minh Duong, David Whitehead and Brian O'Reilly prepared a comprehensive submission that focused on the business of our members: education and training; tourism and hospitality and trade and agriculture.

We are also active at the Vietnam Business Forum with the leadership of David Whitehead, AusCham Vice President and Brian O'Reilly, AusCham Director. The VBF has given us a platform to present to the Prime Minister of Vietnam and the Vietnamese Government the difficulties that are facing businesses in Vietnam.

Danang

We have not forgotten our members in Danang and that is why this year through our director Thien Nguyen, we have increased our presence in the region. We appointed Ms Trang Hanh Tran to the position of AusCham Liaison Representative to Danang. She will be assisting the Executive Director in liaising with our members in Central Vietnam. You would've seen a number of Sundowner events in Danang.

Sundowners

Our monthly Sundowners have been greatly attended and is a great way to network. The Sundowners have been a great platform for new members to connect and to present their business to the chamber. In 2020, we held the first virtual sundowners which was a success with the attendance by the Australian Ambassador to Vietnam.

Returning to Normal

As things return to normal in Vietnam, we turn our attention on bringing a program of initiatives that celebrates the Australian tradition – having a good time. We will be holding the Big Aussie BBQ on 4 October 2020. Later in the year we will also be holding the AusCham Charity Ball - this great AusCham institution returns following many years being missed. For golf enthusiasts we are holding the annual golf scramble in Ho Chi Minh City, Danang and Hanoi in September and October 2020 – check the dates in your cities.

Thank You

The AusCham Board is very proud to have delivered a vibrant chamber during the first half of our term.

We want to take this opportunity to give a special thank to Simon Fraser, Executive Director and his team who have exceeded our expectations in delivering the programs and initiatives.