

3 Sept 2020

Dear SNBA Members & Fellow Industry Players,

### **Challenging Times for Singapore's Nightlife Entertainment Industry**

1. The past six months have been challenging for many of us as we battle against Covid-19. The pandemic has brought unprecedented changes to the nightlife entertainment landscape in Singapore and around the world. Closed since 27<sup>th</sup> March 2020, many of us had experienced complete loss of income for this entire period. While some of us are fortunate to resume business, the imposition of the Safe Management Measures (SMM) and the alcohol restriction makes businesses unsustainable in the long run. We also fully understand the difficulties of our members to upkeep rental, workers' salaries, levies, bills, etc.
2. Since the circuit breaker, SNBA has since been in regular engagement with the agencies such as the Singapore Tourism Board (STB), Enterprise Singapore (ESG), Ministry of Trade & Industry (MTI), and other industry stakeholders such as Asia Pacific Breweries Pte Ltd (APB) and Trade Associations and Chambers such as the Singapore Business Federation (SBF), Association for Small Medium Enterprise (ASME), Singapore Cocktail Bar Association (SCBA) amongst others as we look at ways on how to restart our nightlife entertainment industry as well as the accompanying assistance programmes such as the rental relief framework.
3. While Singapore has gradually re-opened its economy in a safe and responsible manner, our nightlife entertainment industry has yet to be given the green light for resumption. While it can be stressful in the current situation, you can be assured that both SNBA and the Government will do its utmost to help our members tide

over this uncertain period. We would like to take this opportunity to update members on some of the latest industry efforts on the various fronts:

**a) Joint Letter to Minister Chan Chun Sing**

SNBA and the SEA (Singapore Entertainment Affiliation) which has more than 100 corporate members in the karaoke business in Singapore issued a joint letter to Minister Chan Chun Sing on 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2020. The letter covered the concerns and effects of the extended closure of the nightlife entertainment businesses and sought government quick action to uplift the sector.

**b) Various dialogues with Key STB & MTI Representatives**

Since the circuit breaker, SNBA has been in regular engagement with STB to seek clarity and government support for the industry. Arising from the joint letter to Minister Chan, the frequency of dialogues with MTI & STB representatives increased in recent months to discuss the way forward for the nightlife entertainment industry.

Our initial push had been to ask the government to allow the reopening of our closed businesses and seek what guidelines or mitigation it takes to allow business resumption.

However, given the Government's priority to keep Singapore safe from a second wave of Covid-19 transmission, after seeing how various countries such as Korea, Hong Kong and Australia are coping with the second and third waves, it was conveyed that the industry is unlikely to resume operation soon and likely to be placed towards the end of Phase 2.

With the above, SNBA proceeded to appeal to the Government for further and faster financial, licensing and consulting support to alleviate nightlife operators' concerns and pressures in the following areas:

- Temporary or permanent pivoting to other businesses

- Hibernation in possible scenarios
- Liquation and unwinding of businesses

**c) Dialogue with Minister for Law, Mr Shanmugam, Minister of State for National Development, Mr Tan Kiat How and Minister of State for Trade and Industry, Mr Alvin Tan**

SNBA representatives were invited to join in the subject dialogue held on 24<sup>th</sup> August 2020, organised by the Ministry of Law. The dialogue went well with good exchanges, of which Minister Shanmugam agreed to review some of the recommendations put forth by the karaoke operators. These include business resumption for family themed karaoke joints that serve no alcoholic drinks and accompany SMMs, possible extension of rental reliefs, quick clearance on temporary change of use and licensing etc. SNBA shared the same sentiments with SEA counterparts and welcomes the Government's quick resolution to the list of recommendations.

**d) Dialogue with ESG's Chief Executive, Mr Png Cheong Boon, MTI and STB representatives.**

Held on 25<sup>th</sup> August 2020, the discussion centred around the possibility to extend the current drinking hours till 12 midnight instead of the current 1030pm, facilitating licensing changes for operators in their bid for business pivoting, delimiting the Outdoor Recreation Area (ORA) etc. The agencies agreed to review the requests and update once ready.

**e) Appeal for Reinstatement of Outdoor Refreshment Area (ORA) for Holland Village**

With the Holland Village incident happening on the first day of Phase 2 reopening, SNBA swiftly led and band together 15 night-operators in Holland Village with a Code of Conduct (COC) which undertakes and comply during their course of business operations. The operators are fully committed and

responsible for the safety, security and public well-being of customers during their course of business operations. The relevant authorities appear to be receptive of the collective efforts and we are currently working with affected stakeholders to put in place measures and guidelines to reinstate the ORA.

**f) Member of Parliament and SNBA Treasurer, Mr Edward Chia's Parliamentary Speech**

In Mr Edward Chia's maiden parliamentary speech on 31<sup>st</sup> Aug 2020, he reiterated the points that SNBA had earlier put forth to Minister Chan in the joint letter – that is, the need to revive, rejuvenate and restart businesses with the necessary government support which include:

- Assisting enterprises with seed capital and public financing to restart
- Regulatory agencies to process new applications swiftly, taking into account opportunity cost to our society.

His full speech can be found at [here](#).

**g) Media**

The nightlife entertainment plights were picked up by the press over a series of media streams such as the Straits Times, CNA, Today, Lianhe Zaobao, etc which SNBA represented the industry and reiterated the area of assistance on the various fronts to help the industry.

**Next Steps**

4. Due to the wide variety of business concepts our industry is involved in and the different circumstances every operator and employee faces, SNBA's strategy is to seek our government's support to provide as many options and assistance for each and every option possible. Some should be able to re-open soon, some would want to carry on pivoting, some might want to liquidate, and others might want to wait it out by reducing their holding and operating cost. More details will be informed once we have news from the agencies.

5. The nightlife entertainment industry is facing the toughest challenge since independence. Businesses need to adapt to new norms and new operating models as they manoeuvre around Covid-19. SNBA stands ready to walk alongside our members to revive, rejuvenate and restart.
6. Covid-19 has undoubtedly disrupted and affected our nightlife businesses in unimaginable ways. However, we believe we can rise to the occasion and emerge stronger from this crisis. You are not alone in this battle. We are confident that our collective strength and tenacity will pull us out of this to build a better future.
7. In the same note, we strongly appeal to operators who have resumed business to stay vigilant and adhere and comply with the measures set out by government agencies to ensure the safety and well-being of patrons against Covid-19. We want to thank you all for your patience, cooperation, and support during this tough period.
8. We are confronting this crisis from a position of strength. These are extraordinary times but we shall overcome. And may we all emerge stronger, together.
9. Thank you.

Yours sincerely,



Joseph Ong  
President  
Singapore Nightlife Business Association.