

# China Reborn begins with a plea from APTRA President Sunil Tuli



After a greeting by TFWA Managing Director John Rimmer, Day Two of TFWA China Reborn began with a message from APTRA President and Kingpower Group CEO Sunil Tuli.

Tuli began by reminding listeners of the importance of Asia Pacific in travel retail, stating that the region has dominated the growth and acted as trendsetter for the entire industry. Additionally, the region will be the first to fully recover from the pandemic, and it has a young population that is growing in power and shopping resources.

## **Industry needs advocacy**

In order to safeguard the future of the industry and get back to growth in the region, Tuli said the answer is APTRA. “APTRA’s purpose is to strengthen, protect and nurture our industry,” he stated, adding that during a crisis the number-one priority is advocacy.

At such a critical time, he said, advocacy is the way to reach governments and regulatory bodies and create solutions that allow the industry to get back to retailing.

“Ours is a complicated ecosystem,” he said. “We are wholly reliant on other stakeholders for our footfall.” Because of these and other factors, recovery is especially difficult to predict: so much depends on outside forces.

While Tuli agrees that health is and should be the top priority, and therefore APTRA fully supports the global focus on safe travel, for businesses to survive there must be a system that will allow the reopening of borders. He stated that 2021 will be a pivotal time, make or break, and that helping to create an environment where travel retail in the area can truly set on the road to recovery is the absolute focus for APTRA. The association’s latest campaign was to urge 45 governments to standardize testing and border response.

Tuli said this campaign has been very successful; there is engagement and ministers are listening,

but government wheels move slowly – imperceptibly to the outside world – and it is imperative to continue political influence work.

### **Collective voice is necessary**

Travel retail is part of the aviation/tourism ecosystem; APTRA has joined forces and is partnering with the Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA), Association of Asia Pacific Airlines (AAPA), Airports Council International (ACI) and International Air Transport Association (IATA) to engage governments in the region, because “The collective voice is the most impactful voice.” He said: “The collective voice is essential; I cannot overstate the importance.” The amplified voice will ensure the survival of the industry.

But Tuli is “most frustrated” with the “unengaged lack of support” from the TR industry, from airports to retailers to brands. He said there is a huge amount of work going on constantly to push the “slow-moving wheels” of government, to raise the profile of the industry, to stay visible and alive. It is never a fast solution but is vital to every individual and company in travel retail, no matter how big or small.

Right now is a pivotal time planning budgets for the not-for-profit. Tuli says everyone in travel retail must support APTRA; if APTRA does not do this work, then who will?

Being a member of APTRA is the “single most important way to support the future of our industry,” he said. Many businesses suggest they cannot afford to do so, but really, can they afford not to?