

To: The Honorable Prime Minister, Dr Robert Abela.

Cc: The Honorable Minister of Finance, Prof Edward Scicluna.

Cc: The Honorable Minister for the Economy, Investment and Small Business, Mr Silvio Schembri.

Cc: The Honorable Parliamentary Secretary for the Financial Services and the Digital Economy, Mr Clayton Bartolo.

Open letter on behalf of the Service Sector for: Advertising, Media, News Providers, Tech, Digital, Marketing, Branding, Content, Public Relations, Design, Videography and many others.

Honorable Prime Minister,

20th March 2020

We write this letter in a singular moment of global history that inevitably holds a great bearing on our island nation's fate. The spread of the COVID-19 pandemic leaves many real casualties in its wake, none more precious than the lives it has taken, the lives it threatens to take and the ominous cloud of bleakness that it presents on our horizons. Nothing takes precedence over the preservation of human life and the safeguarding of its values. We trust in our legendary defiance as a nation to keep our chin up, push forward and look ahead. We warrant to carry our share of this burden to keep the country going whatever it may cost.

We play our small part here by momentarily shining a light on our world, that deals with creating and communicating messages for businesses and government alike to all the nation.

Ours is a world that is at times the very limelight itself and at others ironically virtually unseen. Like the hired stagehand shining a light on the set, the brighter the light, the deeper the darkness behind it. Brand managers, marketing consultants, media platforms, news providers, digital experts, artists, designers, sign-writers, videographers, film studios, public relations advisors; our extended business ecosystem is a rich and varied one that is in the business of building messages that matter, to grow and sustain business.

The fragility of our businesses is something we are used too, the butterfly effect arising from the slightest threat to our clients' confidence has an immense impact on our survival. This is compounded by the fact that our only, invaluable, resource and indeed livelihood, is the time of hundreds of outstanding humans.

But this is different. We see this storm fast approaching, each month of 'runway' burns away faster and louder. Ours is an industry with players that will not be dented or crippled by this, but that will simply fade away into the night, here today gone tomorrow, without so much as a whimper. Our appeal to you is to deliver measures that will put a few more precious metres between us and this storm, that we may catch our breath and use our wits and resolve to give us a fighting chance to come out of this unusual ordeal with the least possible harm. It is reassuring to see that other countries have responded already by putting forward far-reaching measures. Our practical suggestions to reach some measure of burden sharing for what is really the whole service sector of our economy, include the following:

- Direct assistance of at least 50% of the payroll incurred by the companies for the months of April and May 2020 following which a reassessment will be made for a possible automatic extension.
- Government subsidy on bank interest for any business facility used to maintain ongoing business.
- A direct subsidy to go against current rental expenses.
- A temporary adjustment to employees' tax rates.
- Quarantine leave to be carried by Government.
- A temporary six-month suspension or downward revision on VAT.
- Confirmation that the recently announced deferral of fiscal payments and any subsequent measure in this regard will also include our sector or indeed all the service sector.
- Deferral of any fiscal payments will not incur interest and/or penalties.

We write this letter knowing that you will see this threat with the same clarity that we do. We can only trust that you will use the collective resource of the nation that you have in your custody, now that it matters the most, to give help how and where it is needed. This moment of great need calls for present and clear action.

Thank you,

Signed:

Chris Mifsud – Director, MPS Ltd.

Zak & Benji Borg – Co-Founders & Directors, ANCHOVY plc.

Edward Muscat Azzopardi – Director, Switch Digital & Brand.

Christian Peregin – CEO, Lovin Malta.

Steve Ciantar-Barbara - CEO, Steves&Co. Limited.

Peter-Jan Grech, CEO & Partner, BRND WGN Co LTD.

Matthew Demarco – Partner, Bloom.

David Brockdorff - Managing Director, BPC International Limited Co.

Steve Cassar – Owner & CEO, JPA.

Saviour Balzan – Managing Director MediaToday Co. Ltd.

Gege Gatt – Chairman, Newsbook.

Michel Rizzo – Managing Director, Allied Newspapers Ltd.

PJ Vassallo Mintoff – Director, We Media Ltd.

Noel Azzopardi – Managing Director, Standard Publications.

Ian Castillo – Managing Director, ICON Studios.

Julianne Attard – Chairperson, TBWA\ANG

Jesmond Bonello - Managing Director, Content House Group.

Wesley Ellul – CEO & Founder, Untangled Media Ltd.

Julian Goffin – CEO, Finductive Ltd

Steve Mercieca – CEO & Co-Founder, Dowdall QL Holdings

Maurizio Mamo – CEO, 4Sight Technologies Ltd

Johan Zammit – CEO, Smart Studios Ltd.

David Vella – CEO, Altaro Ltd.

Sebastian Ripard – Partner, TXF Tech Ltd

Stefan Farrugia – CEO, Eunoia Limited

Stefan Alfsson – Co-Founder, NARC

Ruzbeh Bacha – Founder & CEO, City Falcon Trading Ltd

Andrei Andy Linnas – Co-Founder, Thought3D Ltd

Carsten Schaefer – Founder & Director, Premier Manco Ltd.

Mikko Puhakka – Founding Partner, Lion Partners

Benjamin Thomas Vincenti – Co-Founder & Director, Get Hitched Inc Ltd

Bjorn Azzopardi – CEO, Think

Angelo Dalli – CEO, 111 Holdings Ltd

John P. Casaletto – CEO, Intercomp Marketing Ltd

Elisa Krantz – Co-Founder, EK Consulting Ltd

Matthew Camilleri – CEO, Castille Resources Limited

Louis Borg Manche – Managing Director, Perfecta Ltd.

Jesmond Saliba – Managing Director, Corporate Identities Ltd.

Jo Caruana – Founder, Writemeanything

Daniel Abela – Director, Redorange Image Consultants Ltd.

Claire Cassar – Director, Moving Ads Malta Ltd.

Cynthia Mifsud – General Manager, Cowfish Ltd.

Lorna Micallef – Head of Business Development – D4n6 Co. Ltd.

Mark Cassar - Managing Director, Casasoft

David Grech – Co-Founder, KeepMePosted.

Geoffrey Farrugia – CEO, HandsOn Systems Ltd.

Robert Grech – Co-Founder, Findit Ltd.

Andrew Farrugia – Co-Founder, Te fit-Tazza

Philip Cortis - Managing Director, Micro Technology Consultancy Ltd

James Calvert – Founder, Web Matters Ltd.

Simon Buhagiar – Owner, Souvenirs That Don Suck

Martin Borg – Director, Aviense Ltd.

Nathan Farrugia – CEO, Shireburn Software

Francois Grech – Executive Director, Exigy

Philip Cortis – CEO, MT Malta Ltd.

Raphael Micallef Trigona – Managing Director, Systec Ltd.

Joe Aquilina – CEO, Smart Technologies Ltd.

Pierre Mallia – Managing Director, iMovo