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ILLAWARRA BUSINESSES NEED MORE SUPPORT

The region's peak business advocacy organisation, Business Illawarra, has today highlighted the need for ongoing support for the local business community as it battles the current lockdown, and has called on governments and the wider community to do what they can to help lessen the impact.

Since the beginning of the pandemic and this most recent outbreak, Business Illawarra has been talking with businesses throughout the region and listening to how the evolving situation is impacting them.

As the lockdown drags on without an end date, it is becoming increasingly clear existing support measures are insufficient. Meanwhile while businesses are reporting confusion and fatigue with the changing restrictions and new support measures, the ongoing support and patronage of the wider community has been a major boost for many.

Business Illawarra has joined calls for the return of a JobKeeper-style support program, with Executive Director Adam Zarth noting that while it is scaleable, there remains a need for measures to back capital intensive businesses and provide greater industrial relations flexibility.

"Each day this lockdown drags on and with no end in sight, it becomes increasingly clear existing support measures are insufficient, said Mr Zarth.

"We back the return of a JobKeeper-style support program that provides employers with the flexibility to redirect their staff to conduct other duties as they adapt their business models to suit the times."

"There also needs to be certainty for those businesses on a delayed payment cycle for their services. So if a business runs on a 60 day pay cycle, they will not be feeling the pinch now but in two months they will take that hit."

"There are other levers that also need to be looked at by governments at all levels, including waiving or deferring fees, rates, tolls and charges levied upon businesses locally."

"The wider community should keep up the great work supporting all local businesses and business people, whether that be by backing the diverse takeaway food and beverage options on offer, shopping with locals online or, importantly, reaching out to our friends in business with offers of help and a willing ear."

"It is highly concerning that when we surveyed businesses at the start of the lockdown around one in five businesses said they only have enough cashflow to get them through the next month of operations. We are now at the end of that month which means without further support we will see businesses close down, and those that do will be unlikely to reopen."

— ENDS —

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About Business Illawarra

Formerly the Illawarra Business Chamber, *Business Illawarra* is the region's peak business organisation, and the regional office of Business NSW responsible for the south-east of the state, including the Southern Highlands.