



Canberra Business Chamber 2020 Member Survey Results: Policy & Advocacy Priorities

Background

Almost 64% of Canberrans in employment now work in the private sector. There are 28,000 businesses in the ACT, and the vast majority (around 97%) of these are small businesses. Business is a big deal for the ACT.

Canberra Business Chamber's purpose is to drive prosperity of the ACT and our region through business. We're focussed on effective advocacy and leading the discussion about issues that impact ACT business now and into the future.

With a territory election in October 2020, we're developing a policy platform that reflects the needs and concerns raised by our members and the Canberra business community.

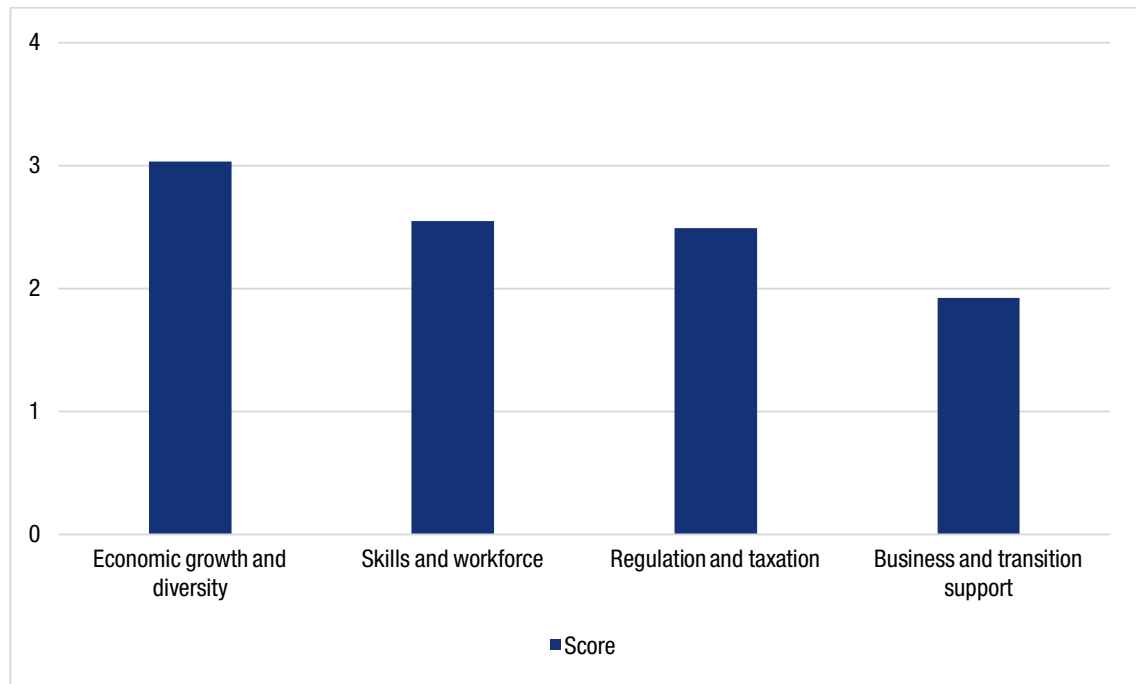
Our regular engagement with members, businesses and stakeholders throughout 2019 made it clear there are four broad areas that business sees as a priority for CBC's policy and advocacy work. There are number of important issues in each area that need action.

2020 Member Survey

15% of CBC members provided a response to our survey. We know that small business owners are time poor, so kept the survey questions and format succinct and to the point.

Priorities for Canberra Business

Respondents were asked to rank 4 broad policy areas in order of their importance to Canberra business.



Policy Area	Overall Rank	% ranked first
Economic Growth and Diversity	1	37
Skills and Workforce	2	23
Gov't efficiency, regulation and taxation	3	24
Business support and transition support	4	16

Priority 1: Economic growth and diversity

Key issues

- A future infrastructure implementation strategy that incentivises private sector investment over the long term.
- Investment in both City Centre Renewal and local trading precincts.
- A plan for a balanced or surplus ACT budget.

Priority 2: Skills and workforce:

Key issues

- A workforce plan and skills strategy for the ACT and Capital Region developed in partnership with the business community.

Priority 3: Government Efficiency, Regulation and taxation

Key Issues

- One Minister with responsibility for business and a mandate to advocate for the business community.
- Reduce the number of ministerial portfolios impacting business from the current 37.
- Urgent review and restructure of the commercial rates regime, in consultation with the business community.
- Review the operations, oversight and certification of the Secure Local Jobs Code.

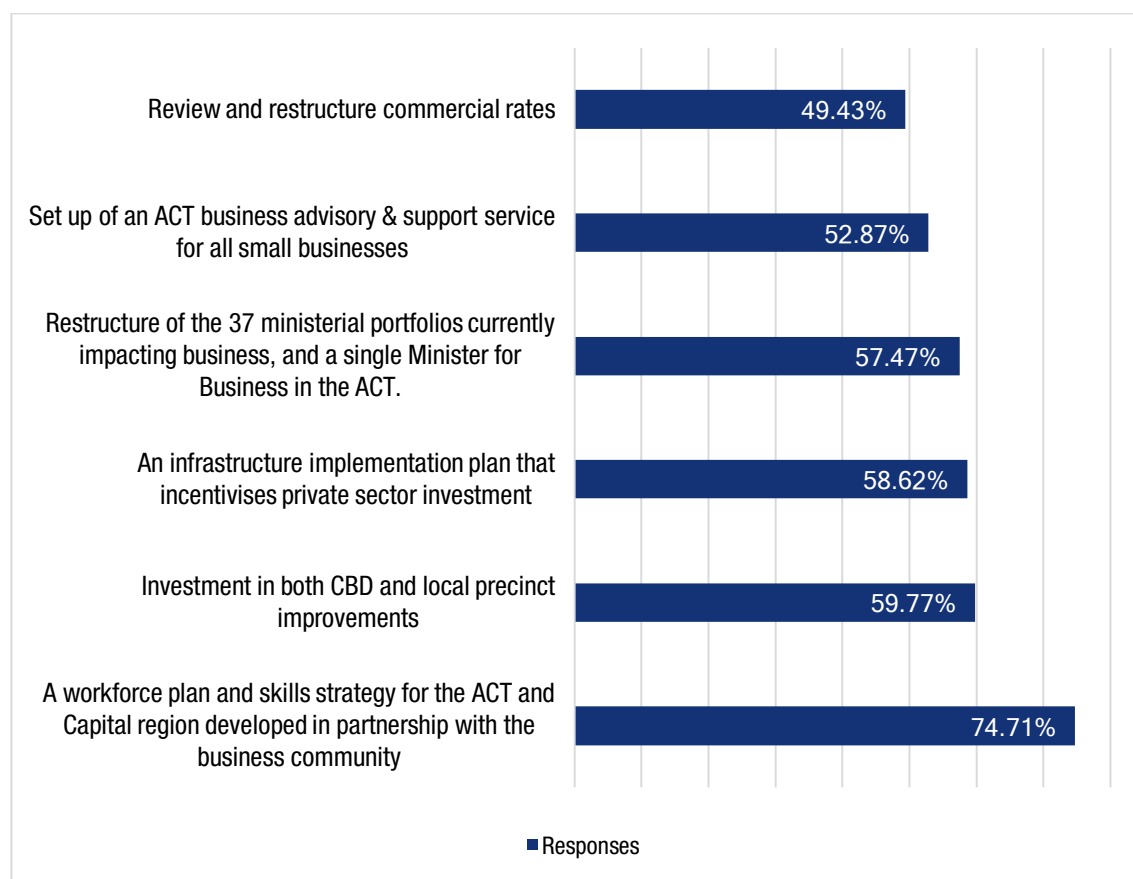
Priority 4: Business and transition support

Key Issues

- Business advisory service for all small businesses.
- Support for transition to new Climate Change policies, ensuring the ability of ACT businesses to compete isn't compromised.

The 5 most important issues for Canberra Business

Members were asked to choose “the 5 most important issues for Canberra Business”, from a list of 12 issues that CBC has raised in 2019 and 2020. The chart shows the % of respondents who included that issue in their top five.



Issues	%	Rank
A workforce plan and skills strategy for the ACT and Capital region developed in partnership with the business community	74	1
Investment in both CBD and local precinct improvements	60	2
An infrastructure implementation plan that incentivises private sector investment	59	3
Restructure of the 37 ministerial portfolios currently impacting business, and a single Minister for Business in the ACT.	57.5	4
Set up of an ACT business advisory & support service for all small businesses	53	5
Review and restructure commercial rates	50	6

[Read our 2020 Pre-Budget Submission](#) for more details on our policy priorities

Open responses

Respondents were given the opportunity to comment on the Chamber policy platform and advocacy priorities. Sample comments include:

“Focus on marketing the ACT. Government priority on marketing the ACT not just as tourist destination but a place to do business - part of attracting talent. Many untold/unknown stories of business success that could be better leveraged to tell our Canberra business story better.”

“Whilst it probably isn't in the realm of CBC responsibilities, I think a lot of businesses in the region will need to ensure that owner / employee mental health is looked after and supported. It's been a dreadful start to 2020, and the media love to put fear into everyone. Federal Govt instability just makes everyone nervous.”

“Canberra is a great place to do business but there is anecdotal evidence of significant churn in the hospitality sector and others. The development of a business environment survey would assist the chamber to better informed of the mark differences between the ACT and NSW with regard to policy, regulations and taxes.”

“Commercial rates = absolute priority.”

“They are very focused on small business. It would be good to see some more focus on making Canberra attractive to large businesses.”

“We would suggest that there is also a need to support older inner south centres such as Manuka & Kingston as well as developing new areas. The loudest voice to government should not necessarily get all the help. Canberra's population can only sustain a certain number of retail precincts.”

“Continued emphasis on issue for community and not for profit organisations alongside for profit initiatives, projects and businesses.”

Next steps

Canberra Business Chamber is a member-based organisation, and we thank our members for providing such a clear picture of their priorities in an election year. The survey has highlighted key policy issues that respondents want their Chamber to focus on, and will inform the Chamber's policy platform their advocacy work leading into the October ACT election.