

Media Release - Monday 23 March 2020

## Canberra Business Chamber says more support is needed for ACT business survival.

As “non-essential” businesses across the ACT take steps to shut down, more support will be needed to help businesses survive in the longer term, the Canberra Business Chamber said today.

“New restrictions that shut down “non-essential services” businesses such as clubs, hotels and restaurants will decimate an industry that has been dealing with a severe downturn for months,” said Chamber CEO Graham Catt. “There’s no way to sugar coat this, the business support measures that have been announced, while welcome, won’t go far enough for the tourism and hospitality industry, and the many small businesses that supply them.”

“Furthermore, targeted financial support will be needed,” said Mr. Catt. “Businesses can’t pay staff when there are no customers and no money coming through the door. We welcome Government assistance to help businesses keep their people, but now we have to face the difficult reality that we cannot save every business or every job.”

The Chamber said that, for many businesses, Government support for “mothballing” may be the best way to help survival.

“A local retailer might need to close their doors temporarily and be given support so that they can be reinvigorated when the health crisis is over,” said Mr. Catt. “To recover from this crisis, we’ll need businesses to still exist in some form and scale up quickly to provide the jobs, and goods and services we need”.

Canberra businesses, like the community as a whole, are facing an unprecedented crisis.

“Nearly two thirds of Canberrans in jobs are employed by the private sector,” said Mr. Catt. “Businesses and their people need information, options and flexibility to make the best decisions during this period. And the support measures announced by both the Federal and ACT Governments must flow urgently to help keep as many businesses as possible afloat.”

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