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Close to 300,000 Queensland businesses not eligible for COVID lockdown payments

More than 60% of Queensland businesses will not be able to access COVID support payments made available to those impacted during the most recent lockdown.

Chamber of Commerce and Industry Queensland (CCIQ) and businesses across the state are concerned non-employing sole traders are not eligible to access payments of \$5,000 made available to businesses which can prove the fourth lockdown this year caused a 30% loss to their business.

CCIQ Policy and Advocacy General Manager Amanda Rohan said sole traders who met the \$75,000 annual turnover threshold should be eligible to access the assistance.

“There are 288,000 non-employing sole traders in Queensland, 63% of 457,833 businesses across the state. They are the lifeblood of Queensland and essentially self-employed keeping themselves in a job,” Ms Rohan said.

“Those businesses work just as hard to earn a livelihood and contribute to the Queensland economy and similarly, they are just as significantly impacted from COVID lockdowns and restrictions.”

She said businesses who were eligible to access the payments were saying they did little to compensate for the true financial and emotional impact of lockdowns.

“Businesses are telling us these payments are too little too late - \$5000 is not enough to cover their losses and they’ll have to wait up to two weeks to receive the cash. Others are saying the application process is too much effort for too little return,” Ms Rohan said.

“Businesses lose income the moment a lockdown starts but their expenses continue today, tomorrow and every day of a lockdown.

“They need support now, not in two weeks, to ensure they’re able to maintain their commitment to staff who rely on them for an income, pay ongoing bills and overheads which don’t go away during lockdown and ensure they’re able to plan their recovery to get back to business as soon as possible.

“Back in March we proposed a targeted COVID-19 Hotspot Recovery Package with threshold eligibility to allow businesses to access support based on their level of losses. These ‘one size fits all’ \$5,000 grants fail to acknowledge not only how significantly businesses are impacted but the fact different businesses are impacted in different ways.”

Close to 80% of businesses CCIQ surveyed during this lockdown said pre-announced financial support from the Queensland Government would help their business to prepare for future COVID-19 lockdowns.

“The level of uncertainty created through not only another lockdown but businesses now having to wait to receive support payments could be the final nail in businesses’ trading coffins,” Ms Rohan said.

“It’s pushing their confidence in their ability to re-open or recover to its limits.

“We acknowledge this is some form of support, but businesses are desperate to know details of a long-term plan for recovery, what’s going to happen if there are further lockdowns and what further support packages will be considered.”

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