

DR MARISA PATERSON MLA SPEECH

23 April 2021

Response speech Ms Castley re: Small Business Advisory Council

Start

I wish to thank Ms Castley for bringing this motion to the Assembly.

Local businesses are critical to a healthy ACT economy and community. One of the many things I love about our local Canberra context is the tangible and evident sense of support from the community and from Government for local businesses.

Never has this been more evident, and more important, than during the current pandemic, and never has local business needed our support so much.

In the Murrumbidgee electorate, we have some wonderful entrepreneurs and local businesses across many industries and sectors.

At Mawson, for example, we have an amazing multicultural melting pot that highlights some of the best examples of the incredible multicultural tapestry of our community. Almost next door to each other we have Lebanese, Swedish, Italian and Vietnamese bakeries; we have Asian and Mediterranean grocery and spice stores; a halal butcher and fresh grocer; Thai massage; and a wide variety of restaurant cuisines.

Many of these local business owners are entrepreneurs who have started new lives in our city. We are lucky to be able to host this diversity of cultures and businesses and are lucky that we have a community and Government who, in return, supports those businesses.

As a new local member, I have started engaging with many local businesses in my electorate to hear from them about their needs, challenges and opportunities; as well as from the local community.

Elsewhere in the Murrumbidgee electorate, the ACT Government has demonstrated its commitment to local shopping areas through a 2.5 million dollar upgrade for the surroundings of the Duffy Shops; as well as upgrades for Brierly Street at Cooleman Court.

At Duffy, I have sought comment from the community in recent weeks via a range of channels as to their ideas for upgrades and improvements for the shopping area surrounds. I've been overwhelmed by the level of interest and engagement, demonstrating just how important these local shopping centres are to the local community. What has become increasingly apparent is how much these local areas provide a space for the community to meet, to socialise and to support local business. The community wants vibrant local places where they feel safe and welcome. Where they have opportunity to support local and contribute to their neighbourhood.

I am proud to work alongside a Government that offers an array of initiatives to help support local business including support, advice and rebates to help businesses recover from the impacts of Covid-19.

Cafes, restaurants and takeaway businesses can apply for a one-off \$1,000 rebate on their electricity bill. Hotels, motels, serviced apartments and function and event venues can apply for a rebate of their water and sewerage fixed charges on Icon Water bills for the 2020-21 financial year. Wages paid to apprentices or trainees employed after 1 August 2020 are exempt from payroll tax from the start of their employment until 30 June 2021. Community event organisers can continue to apply for support of up to \$15,000 for new or existing community events and festivals that are activated in suburbs and town centres during the 2021 calendar year.

Recognition of the impacts of the pandemic on mental health, small business owners can get access to Beyond Blue's NewAccess mental health support program. This program is a free and confidential mental health coaching program, structured over six sessions with a mental health trained coach with a small business background.

I'd urge all local businesses to reach out if they need support and make sure they are taking advantage of any rebates that are available to them.

Ends