

Minister for Business and Better Regulation
Question Time Briefs
February 2021

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CM2020/5694

Portfolio/s: Business and Better Regulation

ChooseCBR Digital Discounts Program

Talking points:

- The ChooseCBR digital discounts program is an economic stimulus measure targeted at hospitality, tourism, arts and recreation, and some personal services sectors, all of which have been significantly affected by COVID-19.
- The \$2.5 million program is an important element of the Jobs and Economic Recovery Plan.
- The trial of the program ran from 9-24 December 2020. The trial saw nearly 48,000 customers sign up to redeem vouchers at nearly 336 participating businesses.
- Over \$337,000 worth of vouchers were redeemed across the 16 day trial, driving a total economic spend of over \$1.9 million.
- There was a wide range of businesses that took part in the program, ranging from gymnastics clubs to cafes and a wide range of retail stores. I was pleased to see a strong representation from our multicultural business community.
- We learnt a lot from the trial. The directorate is looking at the feedback we received from from customers and businesses, as well as data gathered throughout the trial.
- This review will inform changes to the next roll out.

Key Information

- Through the trial members of the community over the age of 18 accessed up to \$40 worth of vouchers each day to spend at eligible businesses that have signed up to the program.
- The vouchers could discount a maximum of 25 per cent of an eligible transaction, meaning that for every \$1 the ACT Government invests in this program, businesses will receive at least \$4 in revenue. Through the trial, we were pleased to see the multiplied spend was roughly \$6.30 per \$1 of Government investment.
- During the trial, eligible businesses needed to:
 - Have a physical shopfront in the ACT;
 - Have a turnover under \$10 million;
 - Have received JobKeeper payments at any stage during 2020; and
 - Be within the retail, tourism, hospitality and arts and recreation sectors as per a list of approved ANZSIC codes.

Cleared as complete and accurate: 01/02/2021

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Max Murdoch

Ext: 76199

Lead Directorate:

Chief Minister, Treasury and
Economic Development

- ChooseCBR is open to a broader range of sectors than similar programs in other states and territories.
 - For example, the NSW Dine & Discover program is limited to hospitality and entertainment industries, while Tasmania's Make Yourself at Home travel voucher program is limited to accommodation and experiences
- Vouchers could not be used for the sale of alcohol, tobacco, or gambling products.

Background Information

- The ACT scheme is closely modelled on the MyDarwin initiative that has been implemented in the City of Darwin and is supported by a similar ICT system.
- Strong uptake on the first day of registrations and redemptions caused some technical issues. These were resolved quickly.

Cleared as complete and accurate: 01/02/2021
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CM2021/289

Portfolio/s: Business and Better Regulation**COVID-19 Support for Business****Talking points:**

- To support local small businesses and local jobs, a range of initiatives have been delivered:
 - **Choose Local campaign, and ChooseCBR:** Marketing Canberra products to encourage consumers to purchase locally and a digital discount voucher scheme supporting local businesses.
 - **Canberra Business and Enterprise Centre (CBEC):** The Canberra Business Advice and Support Service commenced during 2020 and provides up to four hours free advice to Canberra small businesses and subsidised rate after that with uncapped hours;
 - **Skills Canberra** supports ACT registered training providers by paying 50 per cent of Australian Apprentice or Skilled Capital course fees upfront. It has also offered free online infection control training to businesses;
 - **Infection Control Training** \$1.34 million, based on a 50:50 co-contribution by the Australian and ACT Government. The Fund will provide 3,800 fee-free infection control training places to ACT customer-facing workers. Funding is prioritised for those working in the retail, tourism, transport and logistics, hospitality, cleaning, security service, aged and disability sectors
 - **CBR Innovation Network (CBRIN):** In June 2020 ACT Government provided \$607,000 to CBRIN to deliver support to business and academia and drive economic recovery. This funding includes two COVID-19 specific streams of the Innovation Connect grant program and scholarships to fully subsidise CBRIN Idea to Impact Program for fifty entrepreneurs. CBRIN is now expanding its offering to Belconnen and Tuggeranong.
 - **COVID-19 Local Business Commissioner** Brendan Smyth advocates on behalf of businesses in negotiations with landlords, and refers them to relevant Government help.
- ACT Government has offered a range of financial supports to businesses including rates relief, payroll tax waivers and deferrals, stamp duty relief and land tax credit.
- ACT Government has also waived licence fees for food business registration, outdoor dining, and liquor licensing.

Cleared as complete and accurate: 04/02/2021

Cleared for public release by: Choose an item.

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TRIM Ref:

Key Information

- **Rates relief:** Commercial property owners/tenants with an Average Unimproved Value below \$2m have been afforded a range of reliefs, including a \$2,622 fee reduction (equivalent to the annual charge) and option for deferral of all payments until 1 April 2021;
- **Payroll tax waiver:** A six-month payroll tax waiver has been made available to businesses whose operations have been severely limited by COVID-19, especially trade-exposed businesses. It requires an application form, and businesses need to continue to lodge returns. For those businesses completing annual returns, which were due on 21 July 2020, their tax will have been calculated at a rate of 25% of tax payable. **JobKeeper** subsidised wages are also exempt from payroll taxes, and **new apprentices** are exempt from payroll taxes until 31 January 2021.
- **Payroll tax deferrals:** ACT based businesses that have an Australia-wide wage bill up to \$10m will be able to defer their payroll tax, interest free, until 1 July 2022. **Construction** firms can defer their payroll tax liability for six months from April until September 2020.
- **Stamp duty relief:** ACT Govt are offering concessions for contracts exchanged between 4 June 2020 and 30 June 2021. No stamp duty for single residential dwelling blocks; no stamp duty on off-the-plan units up to \$500,000; an \$11,400 reduction in stamp duty for off-the-plan units between \$500,000 and \$750,000. Residential building is up 7.4% in September 2020 vs the same month last year, partly offsetting declines in non-residential (-18.2%) and engineering work (-10.1%) over the same period.
- **Land tax credit:** available to landlords who reduce rent on privately rented properties by at least 25%, with ACT Govt covering 50% of this reduction, up to a maximum of \$1,300 per quarter.
- **Rideshare vehicle license fee waiver:** Rideshare vehicle license fees, including re-registration for operators who have ceased services as a result of COVID-19, is waived; as are roadworthy inspections providing one has been completed within the past 9 months.
- **Food business registration, outdoor dining, and liquor licensing fee waivers:** Food businesses who have prepaid their license will automatically have it extended for an additional 12 months. There are multiple relaxations for liquor licensing; including for on and off licensees with sales <\$3m in the previous reporting year, and options to provide takeaway sales until 31 December 2020 for businesses who normally operate an on-sales model.

Background Information

- **CBEC** is required to provide 750 hours of advice to ACT businesses over the contract period, on areas including Financial, HR / Employment, Operational Management / Compliance, Marketing, Digital, and COVID-19 Government Compliance and Support.

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- **CBRIN:** ACT Government announced that it would provide \$100,000 in funding over four years to expand CBRIN's reach to CIT Tuggeranong and the University of Canberra in Belconnen.

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