

Minister for Business and Better Regulation
Question Time Briefs
2-3 June 2021

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CM2021/29041

Portfolio/s: Business and Better Regulation**ISSUE: How will the *Amp it Up!* Fund help live music venues recover from the impacts of COVID-19?****Communications, media and engagement implications**

- Media reporting of the program [has been positive](#).
- <https://www.canberratimes.com.au/story/7217809/amped-up-government-fund-to-support-canberras-live-music-venues/>

Talking points:

- On 21 April I announced direct support of \$700,000 through the *Amp It Up!* Fund to local live music venues to help them continue to recover from the impacts of COVID-19.
- The support will help grow opportunities for local musicians and other performance artists to get back on stage, and give Canberrans and visitors even more great live entertainment options .
- The *Amp It Up!* Fund is designed to assist small to medium sized live music venues to recover by offsetting the costs associated with performance, programming and promotion, offering live performance and music lovers an exciting calendar of gigs from June to November 2021.
- The 35 applications received for this fund are currently being assessed against the criteria outlined in the guidelines. The fund was oversubscribed with the funding requests totalling \$1.27m.
- Anecdotally, the funding has surprised and delighted the sector. Other jurisdiction have offered similar programs, such as Tasmania, and announcement of *Amp It Up!* in the ACT was well received.

Background Information

- The *Amp It Up!* Fund is \$700,000. There is an additional \$40,000 for Music ACT to assist administration of the program and \$10,000 for a Night-time Economy Forum to be held later in the year.
- The funding round opened on 3 May and closed on 17 May. Venues were supported by Music ACT to apply for funding.
- Venues had to demonstrate that they regularly host live music or other performances, and/or have history of hiring acts, and/or have a dedicated performance and audience space.

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- Venues could apply to meet 100% of their expected costs between 1 June 2021 and 30 November 2021 for engaging artists and technicians, and up to 50% of their marketing and promotion costs.
- As part of the assessment criteria, at least half of the acts programmed by venues for this fund need to be local acts, ensuring that we are continuing to provide opportunities and paid employment to local artists.
- MusicACT supported local venues with their applications and programming and will continue to assist in the administration of the fund.
- An information night was held on Friday 30 April and was attended by 22 venues.

Background Information

- A panel comprising of two ACT Government employees and a representative from Music ACT reviewed the applications. The panel met on Friday 21 May 2021 to discuss and rank the applications and finalise the list of recommendations for ministerial approval.

CM2021/1262

Portfolio/s: Business and Better Regulation**ISSUE:** What has ACT Government done to help small business recover from the pandemic?**Communications, media and engagement implications:**

- 19 May ABC Canberra: [*Tuggeranong Residents feel left behind the rest of Canberra*](#)
- 26 April RiotACT: [*Why can't small business have its own advisory council?*](#)
- 11 May Canberra Times: [*Fear of Skills Shortage if Border Doesn't Open*](#)

Talking Points:

To support local small businesses and local jobs, this Government has organised a range of supports:

- **Canberra Business Advice and Support Service:** I have extended the Canberra Business Advice and Support Service for another 12 months, giving businesses up to four hours free access to expert advice on a range of topics.
- **Skills Canberra** provided eligible RTOs with access to a 50 per cent unit payment, where a student's assessment was unable to be finalised due to workplace access and social distancing policies. In addition, **Skills Canberra** launched the JobTrainer program, which is supporting job seekers and young people (aged 17 to 24, who have left school) by providing fully funded (fee-free) training places.
- **We've ensured that money is available to support Infection Control Training** with \$1.34 million supporting 3,800 fee-free infection control places to customer facing workers, through a 50:50 co-contribution by the ACT and Commonwealth governments.
- **CBR Innovation Network (CBRIN):** In June 2020 the ACT Government provided \$607,000 to CBRIN to deliver support to business and academia and drive economic recovery. This funding included two COVID-19 specific streams of the Innovation Connect grant program and scholarships to fully subsidise the CBRIN Idea to Impact Program for fifty entrepreneurs.
- The 2020-21 Jobs and Economic Recovery round of the **Priority Investment Program** resulted in six projects being shortlisted with ACT Government investing up to \$2m in knowledge economy proposals which will help create jobs in the ACT's universities, research and private sectors. An independent panel has assessed the shortlisted proposals and an announcement on the successful projects will be made soon.
- **COVID-19 Local Business Commissioner** Brendan Smyth advocates on behalf of businesses in negotiations with landlords, and refers them to relevant help.
- We've offered a range of financial supports to businesses over the course of the

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pandemic, including rates relief, payroll tax waivers and deferrals, stamp duty relief and land tax credit.

- We have also waived licence fees for food business registration, outdoor dining, and liquor licensing.

Key Information

- **Rates relief:** In 2020-21 average rates for commercial properties with an average unimproved value of \$2m or less did not increase.
- **Rent reduction support:** Landlords of commercial properties with an average unimproved value of \$2m or less, with tenants who had been directly impacted by COVID-19, could apply for rent reduction support if they reduced rent for their tenants.
- **Payroll tax waivers/exemptions:** Have been available for businesses unable to trade or only operate on a very limited basis, due to ACT Government health-related restrictions, on wages paid between September 2020 and June 2021. Prior to this, a six-month payroll tax waiver on wages paid from March to August 2020 had been provided to businesses directly impacted by National Cabinet's 'prohibited activities and venues' list.
- **Payroll tax deferrals:** ACT based businesses that have an Australia-wide wage bill up to \$10m can defer their 2020-21 payroll tax, interest free, until 1 July 2022.
- **Construction** firms could defer their payroll tax liability for six months from April until September 2020.
- **Stamp duty relief:** The ACT Government is offering concessions for contracts exchanged between 4 June 2020 and 30 June 2021. There is no stamp duty for single residential dwelling blocks; no stamp duty on off-the-plan units up to \$500,000; and an \$11,400 reduction in stamp duty for off-the-plan units between \$500,000 and \$750,000.
- **Food business registration, outdoor dining, and liquor licensing fee waivers:** Food businesses which have prepaid their license will automatically have it extended for an additional 12 months, until 31 March 2022. General licensees received an additional 12 month waiver until 30 June 2022. Applications fees for obtaining commercial liquor permits and amending these permits were waived for 12 months from 25 March 2020 to 24 March 2021, where businesses could provide takeaway sales.

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Portfolio/s: Business and Better Regulation**ISSUE: What is being done to ensure ChooseCBR is a success?****Recent media summary**

- [21 May 2021, The RiotACT](#)
- [18 May 2021, Canberra Times](#)
- [18 May 2021, ABC Canberra](#)
- [18 May 2021, The RiotACT](#)

Talking points:

- A range of changes have been made to the ChooseCBR program following the trial to make it easier for businesses and consumers to participate and increase the range of businesses participating in the program. Key changes include:
 - removing the requirement for eligible businesses to have received JobKeeper;
 - increasing the voucher amounts to \$10, \$20 and \$50 per day;
 - increasing the discount from 25% to 50%; and
 - providing more resources for businesses to make the most of the program including a Business Toolkit.
- The program is being promoted across traditional and social media channels. We are providing information directly to businesses and business organisations to help them inform their members.
- Businesses that have signed up will receive a ChooseCBR Business Toolkit that will include a range of resources they can use to help train their staff and to promote the program to their customers

If asked when the program will close

- The program will remain open until the \$2 million worth of vouchers have been redeemed.

If asked how quickly the \$2million will be spent

- Given the larger voucher amounts, and with more businesses able to participate, we hope to see the money spent steadily over the next few months.

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If asked if ChooseCBR is still required if our economy is performing well

- There is no doubt we are lucky to have one of the strongest labour markets in the country, and one of the strongest economies as a result of the ACT Government's efforts over the past year.
- But we know some industries and sectors were hit particularly hard by the COVID-19 pandemic. ChooseCBR will go some way to help make up for that hit, as well as give businesses and consumers confidence so we can keep people employed.

If asked why the program is tiered, rather than a set value voucher (per NSW scheme)

- There is a broader range of businesses eligible to participate in ChooseCBR than the NSW scheme.
- Consumers in the NSW scheme only get one lot of four \$25 vouchers. We believe there is much greater flexibility with ChooseCBR – registered consumers get three vouchers of different values every day until the money runs out.
- This can help businesses up-sell, gives customers more flexibility and provides a range of options for different business types.

If asked about the administration costs

- \$123,000 was allocated for administrative and operational expenses to support the rollout of \$2,500,000 of discount vouchers through the trial and the full rollout of the scheme, funding both one-off establishment of the program, as well as ongoing delivery.
- There was approximately \$190,000 unexpended from the trial available for additional supports for businesses and system upgrades if required.
- In total \$203,000 has been allocated to date **for the trial** and full rollout of \$2.5 million in vouchers including one off establishment of the program, system and hosting capacity upgrades, supports and information for businesses and consumers, and promotional material.

If asked about the scope of eligible businesses

- ChooseCBR was conceived primarily as a support measure for certain industries impacted by COVID-19 and the associated health restrictions.
- It is also, by nature, a scheme for businesses which would benefit from increased numbers of relatively small discretionary spends.
- This is why food and accommodation, retail, arts and recreation and personal services businesses were selected for the program.

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.

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