



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE COVID-19 2021 PANDEMIC RESPONSE
Ms Elizabeth Lee MLA (Chair), Ms Jo Clay MLA (Deputy Chair), Ms Suzanne Orr MLA

ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Asked by ELIZABETH LEE MLA: To ask the Chief Minister

In relation to:

1. On what grounds did the ACT Government determine the Real Estate and Construction sectors would be ineligible for the COVID-19 Business Support Grant from 17 September 2021?
 - a. Who made this decision?
2. What ACT Government Support Grants are available for real estate or small construction businesses that have experienced a 30% or more reduction in income during the lockdown?
 - a. If any, how has this information been publicised/ advertised?
3. Did the ACT Government consult with the real estate sector, the construction sectors and/or its industry bodies in relation to its decision to determine these businesses ineligible for the COVID-19 Business Support Grant?
 - a. If so, please provide a summary and copies of the consultation conducted, including when, with whom and any notes or correspondence related to the consultation.
 - b. If not, why not?
4. Were any construction or real estate businesses determined ineligible to access COVID-19 Business Support Grants from:
 - a. 3 September;
 - b. 10 September; and provide reasons for why they determined ineligible.

ANDREW BARR MLA: The answer to the Member's question is as follows:–

1. A key component of the cost-sharing agreement with the Commonwealth was that businesses would be eligible while restrictions were in place. As restrictions were eased in certain sectors, businesses would no longer be eligible for extension payments. This is consistent across other Commonwealth cost-shared schemes in other jurisdictions.

When the extension payments were announced on 15 September, it was stated that payments would be made to businesses “in industries still significantly impacted by the health restrictions”.

The majority of the construction sector was able to return to work after public health measures eased for that sector on 3 and 10 September 2021. The real estate sector was able to trade under some restrictions from 17 September.

A Special Circumstances Review has been established for those businesses in these industries that were unable to return to work until 15 October 2021.

2. Businesses in the construction and real estate sectors that experienced a 30 per cent decline in turnover as a direct result of lockdown were eligible to receive the initial COVID-19 Business Support Grant payments. Approximately 30 per cent of all applications for Business Support Grants came from these sectors.
 - a. Information about the financial assistance available to businesses during the lockdown has been communicated through a variety of paid and owned channels such as digital, social media and radio, as well as e-newsletters and stakeholder networks. Information about the Special Circumstances Review process has been published on the ACT Government's Business Hub website, provided to industry bodies, and provided directly to those businesses that have been in contact with the Business Support Grants team.
3. As noted above, a key component of the cost-sharing agreement with the Commonwealth was that businesses in sectors that were no longer significantly affected by the public health measures would not be eligible for extension payments. The Master Builders Association and Master Plumbers Association were consulted on the Special Circumstances Review process.
4. As at 27 October 2021, three COVID-19 Business Support Grant applications from the construction sector have been declined. Two of these businesses did not meet the eligibility criteria relating to GST registration. The other application was a duplicate.

Approved for circulation to the Select Committee on the COVID-19 2021 Pandemic Response

Signature: 

Date: 5.11.21

By the Chief Minister, Andrew Barr MLA