

CORONAVIRUS — BUSINESS ASSISTANCE PACKAGE

756. Hon Dr Steve Thomas to the Leader of the House representing the Premier:

I refer to the \$72 million Level 2 COVID-19 business assistance package on 2 March 2022, and I ask:

- (a) (a) as at 30 April 2022, how many applications has the Government received for support under this package;
- (b) (b) how many of these applications have been fully assessed to date;
- (c) (c) of the applications that have been assessed, how many have been deemed eligible for support, and how many have been deemed ineligible; and
- (d) (d) as at 30 April 2022, how much of the \$72 million package has been paid out to Western Australian businesses?

**Hon Sue Ellery replied:**

Information relating to the Level 1 COVID-19 Business Assistance Package, Level 2 COVID-19 Business Assistance Package and the Safe Transition Industry Support Package has been included in this response, as detailed in responses to Legislative Council Questions on Notice 750 and 752.

The three packages consist of a total of more than 20 separate initiatives, which are delivered by a range of State Government agencies. The initiatives include a range of measures, including both direct and indirect business support initiatives. Some initiatives did not require an application and therefore a total number of businesses receiving support under each package is not available. For example, \$3.6 million of support for licensed venues was delivered through the waiver of liquor licensing fees which was automatically applied to relevant license holders.

Level 1 COVID-19 Business Assistance Package

Over 6,000 applications were received for programs within the \$66.8 million Level 1 COVID-19 Assistance Package.

As at 6 August 2022, a total of 5,430 applications were received for the Tenant Rent Relief Scheme (TRRS), with over 52 per cent of applications received in the final 30 days of the program. Of these, 3,957 applications have been approved and \$11.2 million in assistance has been provided to businesses. All completed applications received prior to 1 June 2022 have been processed.

A large number of applications that have been submitted under the TRRS program are incomplete, which includes missing documentation or evidence. The Small Business Development Corporation (SBDC) is unable to process incomplete applications until the required information has been provided by the applicant.

The package also includes targeted support programs for restaurants and bars, nightclubs and other entertainment venues, which are being administered by the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries.

The \$5 million Alfresco Support Program received 556 applications, of which 552 have been approved and only four have been declined.

The \$1.8 million Nightclub Assistance Program received 25 applications, of which 17 have been approved and none have been declined.

The \$1.3 million Performing Arts, Theatres and Cinemas Assistance Program received 29 applications, of which 25 have been approved and two have been declined.

Level 2 COVID-19 Business Assistance Package

On 2 March 2022, the McGowan Government announced the \$71.7 million Level 2 COVID-19 Business Assistance Package.

This package consisted of an estimated \$66.8 million Small Business Hardship Grants (SBHG) Program, which has provided \$84.3 million of direct support to businesses as at 6 August 2022—which is above the Government’s initial estimate at the time, helping deliver financial support to a larger range of small businesses that were impacted. This was expected as the State Government enhanced its promotion of the program to ensure all small businesses were aware of the support available.

A total of 26,779 applications have been received under the SBHG program, of which 7,879 have been approved and 532 declined. Over 66 per cent of applications submitted were received within the final month of the program, with 42 per cent of applications—almost 12,000—received in the final 14 days of the program.

A large number of applications that have been submitted under the SBHG program are incomplete, which includes missing documentation or evidence. The SBDC is unable to process incomplete applications until the required information has been provided by the applicant.

An expanded approvals team of more than 52 people is processing applications at the SBDC. Their commitment to processing applications as promptly as possible should be commended.

Completed SBHG applications submitted after 1 May 2022 have a processing timeframe of up to 12 weeks. All completed applications received over 12 weeks ago have been processed.

Four applications were received for the \$2.8 million payroll tax relief program for large hospitality businesses. All four of these applications were approved.

Safe Transition Industry Support Package

The \$77 million Safe Transition Industry Support Package was announced on 10 February 2022. The package included nine support programs for the international education, tourism, aviation and events sectors.

A significant proportion of the package were programs designed to support industries and were not payments or grants made directly to businesses. For example, the package included payments to international students to assist with quarantine-related costs, further funding for the Aviation Recovery Fund and an expansion of the Getting the Show Back on the Road Program.

Under the Tourism Support Program, 215 applications to the value of \$3,910,000 have been approved and 41 declined.

Under the Tourism Deposit Refund Program, 34 applications to the value of \$900,411 have been approved and eight declined.

Under the Travel Agent Support Fund, 192 applications to the value of \$2,715,000 have been approved and eight have been declined.

Under the Event Suppliers Support Program, 69 applications to the value of \$1,987,500 have been approved, and 32 have been declined.