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Local businesses are facing challenges, but statistics show optimism for the future

The key findings from the 2021 Victor Harbor Business Survey have now been released, showing that local business owners are generally optimistic about their business's future.

In December 2021, the City of Victor Harbor and Business Victor Harbor circulated a business survey to gain insight into the opportunities and challenges faced by our local business community.

Business leaders were asked a series of questions relating to the nature of their business, how their business has performed in recent times, their views on the local business environment and the types of support services that would help grow and sustain their business.

The 2021 survey also asked a series of questions to understand the impact of border closures, constraints around attracting labour and investments that would grow the local economy.

From the 124 responses received, there was an indication that local businesses are generally optimistic about the future of their business in Victor Harbor, with elements of uncertainty from COVID-19 restrictions and labour force shortages continuing to impact the local business environment.

City of Victor Harbor Mayor, Dr Moira Jenkins, accredited local businesses for their adaptability and innovation over a challenging two years.

“Council is committed to supporting our local economy, and to do this we need to remain connected to the views and opinions of local businesses,” said Mayor Jenkins.

“The survey has provided a pulse check on how our business community is going, and the findings have offered valuable and localised business insights that will help inform Council's future decision-making.”

“We will be working very closely with Business Victor Harbor to understand what now needs to be addressed in terms of support activities and necessary reforms.”

Some of the key findings from the survey include:

- 'Uncertainties associated with COVID-19 restrictions' followed by 'Taxes and government charges' were highlighted as the most common major constraint for local businesses, followed by 'Licencing and regulations' that continue to place pressure on business growth.
- There remains an overwhelming majority (69%) of businesses that are either optimistic or very optimistic about the future of their business in the region. 9% of businesses were 'Less than optimistic'.
- 'Lifestyle and amenity' and 'Proximity to Adelaide' were highlighted as the most influential factors for deciding to operate a business in Victor Harbor.
- Local businesses indicated that 'Seasonality' and 'Extent of low income households' made it difficult to operate a business in Victor Harbor.
- The implications of border closures on local businesses were mixed with 27% indicating either 'A great deal' or 'A lot', while 50% of businesses indicated 'A little' or 'None at all'.
- 35% of businesses indicated that a significant constraint on their business is the 'Availability of skilled labour', up from 15% in 2019.
- Issues cited for attracting employees were 'Insufficient skills or experience' and 'Lack of affordable accommodation'. These two factors represented 61% of responses.

Business Victor Harbor Chairperson, Michael Schubert, said that while the survey results were mostly optimistic, it is clear that businesses are also currently facing some challenges.

"COVID-19 uncertainty, taxes, regulations and availability of skilled labour continue to present difficulties and restraints for the growth of our local economy," Mr Schubert said.

"We are very appreciative of the businesses who took the time to complete the survey, as the high number of responses received provides us with a clear direction and credible evidence of what Victor Harbor businesses are saying."

"Small businesses are the backbone of our town, representing the overwhelming majority of employers. Having a clear understanding of their challenges and opportunities will help us work with Council and other forms of government and industry to provide necessary support."

Full details of the business survey including the complete key findings report can be viewed at www.victor.sa.gov.au/businesssurvey.