

MEDIA RELEASE



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Prioritise local business support, jobs growth, stimulus: that's the plea from business leaders as Canberrans head for the polls

As the first votes are cast in the territory election, the release of latest ABS unemployment data last week has revealed the scale of the challenge ahead for the next ACT Government.

With polls opening yesterday (Monday 28 September) the Canberra Business Chamber, Master Builders Association, Property Council of Australia and Australian Hotels Association have collectively issued a plea for all candidates in next month's election to prioritise policies which will create jobs and grow the economy.

Canberra Business Chamber CEO Graham Catt said, "The ABS data for August shows that the ACT's unemployment rate is now 4.2%, meaning 10,413 Canberrans are out of work. The data also shows that the impact of the COVID recession has been felt hardest in the private sector."

Over the past 12 months more than 7,000 private sector jobs had been lost, while the public sector has actually grown.

Master Builders ACT CEO Michael Hopkins said "The COVID recession is being felt particularly hard in the construction industry because of the high proportion of small businesses. More than 1,000 ACT construction workers have lost their job and many businesses are worried about the rapidly declining forward pipeline of work.

The building industry needs an ACT Government which backs local businesses, reforms our procurement and planning system, and supports apprentices through the COVID recession."

ACT Executive Director of the Property Council of Australia Adina Cirson said, "Over the next four years we need our government focused on resourcing the growing of Canberra if we are to deliver the outcomes needed for our growing and ageing population, and to make sure we have the right housing types, where and when we need them. Without growth we will not have a strong economy." The Property Council has called for the planning system to be well resourced and as efficient as possible as we face the economic challenges posed by COVID-19.

Australian Hotels Association General Manager Anthony Brierley said, "The hospitality industry is losing 60 jobs a day each day that coronavirus restrictions continue. When casting their votes, I encourage Canberrans to consider the immediate importance of restoring jobs in the short-term, and creating new ones over the next four years."

Mr Catt said "It is clear from the data that the economic impact of COVID is being felt by business. As from yesterday, many of the thousands of businesses receiving JobKeeper are seeing a reduction in their revenues while many others will be facing the harsh reality of closure. Doing everything we can to support local business, support small and medium enterprises, and help the private sector to protect and create jobs is absolutely critical for every Canberran."

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