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MEDIA RELEASE

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Be.Bendigo CEO, Rob Herbert indicated that Be.Bendigo would be closely watching tomorrow (Tuesday) night's Federal Budget announcements, and would also be keenly looking to the subsequent Budget response from the Federal Opposition.

"In an Election Year, it is incredibly important that the voice of Regional Business is heard and responded to", he said. "Bendigo has experienced strong population growth in recent years, and this appears to have accelerated during the Covid pandemic. We want to ensure that local businesses - and our communities - are able to maximise the economic, social and cultural benefits of this growth, while ameliorating some of the pressures that this growth can produce."

"A Be.Bendigo survey earlier in the year indicated that our members and partners had concerns about attracting appropriately skilled workers to Bendigo, with issues around availability of suitable residential accommodation likely contributing to this issue", Mr Herbert continued.

"It is pleasing to note that pre-Budget announcements from both major Parties have sought to address the issue of housing affordability and availability", he said.

Fuel costs are the big issue on everybody's lips at the moment though. "The recent significant rises in the cost of fuel have had a disproportionate impact on regional businesses and communities", according to Mr Herbert.

"As well as the direct cost of putting fuel in the tank to get to work and just going about our daily lives in regional areas, most of the finished goods we buy and business inputs are transported by road, over long distances. Consequently, the steep increases in fuel costs have had a much greater impact in regional areas, as most local people will have experienced", he continued.

"We have seen the way the local economy is already bouncing back, with the recent opening of the Elvis Exhibition at Bendigo Art Gallery providing the headlines, but with a whole range of events providing great stimulus for hospitality and the visitor economy, which helps to put more money into the hands of local businesses and people. A Federal budget that provides for a cut in the fuel excise – even as a short-term measure – will ensure that this recovery will continue."

RELEASE ENDS

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