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MEDIA RELEASE

Bendigo businesses have reported considerable disruption caused by the Omicron outbreak.

In responding to a survey undertaken by Be.Bendigo, those businesses indicated that the lack of availability of Rapid Antigen Tests (RATs) had resulted in impacts on ability of staff to attend the workplaces of more than 70% of respondents to the survey, whilst more than 80% of respondents indicated that their businesses had been effected by either staff testing positive for Covid, or being required to isolate as a close contact.

Whilst there has been no enforced lockdown during the recent period, many organisations have been operating on a “work from home if you can” basis. The impact on sales and turnover of this, together with those required to isolate, and others choosing to stay at home during the ordinarily busy January holiday period means that more than 70% have indicated the Omicron wave has had an impact on their business income.

Some businesses felt that there was insufficient appreciation by Government of the situation in which many businesses now found themselves – whilst there are no formal “lockdowns” in place, the financial impacts are very real for many – potentially worse than the original or Delta variants – but without further Government support to assist businesses through this tough time.

Interim CEO of Be.Bendigo, Rob Stephenson, said, “Local businesses were optimistic and excited by the prospect of returning to “normal”, with strong pre-Christmas trade, and support for local businesses. January, however, has not seen the levels of trade that many had hoped for, after an extremely tough 2021.

“Be.Bendigo urges Governments at both State and Federal level to consider the particular financial issues that many businesses are currently facing, and consider supporting them through to the long-awaited Covid Recovery phase.”

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