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Unemployment on the rise across region



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Page 1 of 1

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POLITICS

BY **KAYLA OSBORNE**

NSW Labor has called on the Berejiklian Government to undertake an immediate and comprehensive review of its Covid assistance schemes as unemployment levels rise.

However Camden Liberal MP Peter Sidgreaves says small business owners in his electorate had praised the NSW Government's schemes.

Recent figures from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) show that more than 13,800 jobs have been lost in the outer south-west area since Covid gripped the state.

The outer south-west area extends from Bargo to Glenfield and includes Camden.

The statistics show that since 7283 jobs were lost and another 6571 people left the workforce since February.

NSW shadow treasurer Walt Secord and Labor Deputy MLC for Camden Mark Buttigieg are calling on the government to make it easier for local businesses to access financial support.

"We have to be cautious about the unemployment data because the Federal Government's JobKeeper program masks the true unemployment rates in NSW - which are predicted to rise to above 10 per cent in December," Mr Secord said. "We are all in this together and we provide our bipartisan support to Covid programs, but we do not provide our support to programs that are so

tight and restrictive that no one can access them."

Camden MP Peter Sidgreaves said nearly 600 small businesses in the region had received assistance from the state government through

the Small Business Support Grants.

"I understand this pandemic is a very tough time for small business owners and their employees, however, I do not think eligibility rules are stopping businesses from accessing small business grants available from the NSW Government," he said.

"I spoke to a large number of small business owners in the Camden electorate who provided overwhelming positive feedback on the NSW Government's business response measures to Covid-19."

Mr Sidgreaves said the response the grants across the state had been mostly positive.

"Of the applicants who chose to leave feedback on the grant process, there was an overwhelmingly positive sentiment about the ease of the process," he said.

"Of the 5500 applicants who chose to leave feedback, over 99 per cent gave the process a thumbs up."

Mr Buttigieg said businesses across the region were suffering due to the tough criteria these schemes require.

"Premier Gladys Berejiklian and her Treasurer Dominic Perrottet crow about their so-called financial support, but it transpires that the

support is a mirage," he said.

"We are months into the pandemic and people have lost their houses, their businesses and their jobs.

"We have people with their backs to the wall, yet the Berejiklian Government continues to insist that their schemes are a success. They are not."

Wollondilly Liberal MP Nathaniel Smith did not respond to the Advertiser's request for comment.