



MEDIA RELEASE

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Report finds 50% of businesses in Bega Valley lack confidence in the viability of their business operations in 2021, with Victorian Border Closure over Summer a contributing factor.

The impacts of the Victorian border closure over Summer 20/21 have been felt far and wide across the Sapphire Coast region, with the findings of a Business Survey Report released this week showing businesses are still reeling after multiple shutdowns.

“Of perhaps most concern is that 50% of the businesses surveyed were lacking confidence in the viability of their business operations for 2021,” said Anthony Osborne, Managing Director for [Sapphire Coast Destination Marketing](#).

“Our region indeed took a big blow over the Summer. Many businesses were already trying to climb out of holes created by the bushfires that devastated us over the previous summer, along with the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent drop in visitation during 2020.

“The hard closure of the Victorian border saw businesses scrambling, with concerning impacts on turnover, staffing and threats to livelihood,” Anthony continued.

Local food and beverage business owner, Peter Caldwell, Director of [Longstocking Brewery](#) in Pambula, took part in the survey and revealed just how bad the impacts were on his and other local businesses.

“Whilst I wholeheartedly supported the border closures if there was a risk of Covid-19 not being managed in NSW, or having an impact on our Victorian cousins after already suffering through lockdown, the impact on us was dramatic.

“We had just had four days of excellent sales when the Victorian border closed. We had 130 people booked in of which just seven turned up. We tried to re-book people but were unable to, and as a consequence had to lay off staff.

“It was just so ironic that this happened on the exact same day as the fire threats over last summer. It brought back all of the emotion into it. We just went into fight or flight mode. But we survived, we’re still here and the locals have been enormously supportive. Despite it being very challenging, we are all in it together,” Peter said.

The Bega Valley Business Survey Report, commissioned by Bega Valley Shire Council, Sapphire Coast Destination Marketing and Destination Southern New South Wales, was an online survey made available to businesses across the Bega Valley to assist in understanding the recent impacts of the hard closure of the Victorian border from 31 December 2020, to

11 January 2021 due to the Covid-19 Pandemic. 177 people participated in the survey which was designed and administered by an independent consultant.

“Traditionally, the January to March period accounts for approximately 32% of yearly visitation to the Bega Valley. And the total revenue for December/January is estimated to be \$75 million,” Anthony continued.

The report findings showed on average it was estimated that business lost 46% in annual turnover by the closure of the NSW/Victorian border. 81 businesses (54%) had to reduce their staffing levels with 53 full-time staff and 218 part-time laid off during this period.

Although 49 accommodation businesses received new bookings during this period from Sydney and Canberra, 62% did not experience any turnover recovery during the Victorian border closure period.

Bega Valley Shire Mayor Russell Fitzpatrick said the survey’s findings do paint a stark picture.

“After seeing our much-needed tourists leave the shire in droves on New Year’s Eve two years in row, it’s not surprising our businesses are struggling,” Cr Fitzpatrick said.

“Through Sapphire Coast Destination Marketing, as well as the Bega Valley Business Support Group and our ongoing advocacy with the state and federal governments, Council is committed to supporting our local businesses throughout this tough time.

“This is a really stressful time for business owners, and I’d encourage anyone who needs support to reach out to the Bega Valley Business Support Group,” Cr Fitzpatrick concluded.

A Summary of the Bega Valley Business Survey Report is provided below as further background, and the summary can also be found online

<https://www.sapphirecoast.com.au/bega-valley-business-survey-report-final-010221-summary/>

For more information, images or to arrange an interview, please contact:
Anthony Osborne – 0428 243 539 or aosborne@sapphirecoast.com.au