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## VRCA calls on the State Government to do more for businesses

The Victorian Regional Chamber Alliance (VRCA) is again calling for support for Victorian businesses, as the situation worsens across the State.

For some sectors, the business environment is dire, with many wondering how they will continue to survive.

At the start of the pandemic, the Victorian Government quickly recognized the importance of supporting business, and that regional Chambers of Commerce were a key to business survival.

Now faced with worsening business conditions, the VRCA needs the Victorian Government to once again throw support directly behind regional businesses and the Chambers.

"We call on the Government to recognize that Regional and Rural business have very different needs, and no one is better situated to understand their needs than the local Chamber of Commerce or business group," says the VRCA.

"Instead of funding national or state bodies to deliver programs, fund us – the people who know. If the same money was invested directly into regional and rural chambers, rather than in a new Statewide initiative, the outcomes would be far greater.

"We deal directly with small business on the ground every day and the situation is dire. It's like Covid all over again, except with no direct financial support or grant opportunities to assist.

"All businesses are watching their bottom line due to cost-of-living impacts and issues with distribution chains and stock levels, and the first thing to go is subscriptions and memberships. We have more dropping out than we do joining at this point. There needs to be greater funding support to ensure the long-term sustainability of these organisations across the state."

Further to this, the VRCA is also calling on the Victorian Government to announce some emergency small business support grants, as Chambers field distraught calls almost daily, across every sector.

"Recovering from the pandemic, holding debt, tax increases, staff shortages, skill shortages, drought, flood, new legislation to absorb, the list goes on. So many are at breaking point," says the VRCA.

"What we need is investment and grant opportunities that will go directly to the areas and people who need it the most, and quickly."

