



PARLIAMENT OF NEW SOUTH WALES  
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

**FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTY-SEVENTH PARLIAMENT**

**Private Members' Statements**

15 February 2022

**COVID-19 AND WALLSEND ELECTORATE SMALL  
BUSINESSES**

**Ms SONIA HORNERY (Wallsend) (18:36):**

Small businesses in the Wallsend electorate struggled through two years of the pandemic, and many are at tipping point. They need support and clarity from the Government now more than ever. The current business downturn due to COVID-19 is shattering local small business owners. The Government fails to provide appropriate access to financial support for small business operators and owners who have a turnover of less than \$75,000, and there are quite a few of them.

Recently I was contacted by a number of local businesses in desperate need of support from the New South Wales Government—support they are not receiving and is denied to them. I spoke to Troy Clarke, who is a foundation member of the Newcastle Knights and a successful businessman. He is the owner of a ZoRiley's, a local Waratah cafe. His business is experiencing such a downturn that he is very concerned that he will not survive without government support. His downturn in trade over the past two years has been so severe that his yearly turnover has dropped below the \$75,000 threshold, making him ineligible for any assistance. When I asked Troy if his business would survive he said:

*I can't see us lasting another 12 months. I do this all on my own. It is stressful enough running a business day by day without worrying about the future. But what can you do?*

It is the small corner shops that keep the economy alive, not the big end restaurants. The amount that the Government throws to the top end is unbelievable.

The Government should be looking after everyone, not just the rich, and that is what this package is set up for. Troy is one of many small business owners facing a bleak future. I also spoke to Murray, who owns a local catering business. Murray told me:

*I am a small business owner occasionally employing local subcontractors. I turned over less than \$75,000 last financial year and so miss out on the new assistance but my bills, fees and charges continue. I have to take a part-time job to avoid losing my home. This is not very easy for me at all. The small amount of money that was available in the last assistance package would really have helped save my business. If I don't get some assistance I won't be able to continue.*

Everyone I spoke to is damaged and dismayed at the Government's lack of care for their struggles. These are incredibly trying times and we must make sure that nobody is left behind. The Government must ensure that businesses who have a turnover of less than \$75,000 per annum—and we all have many of them in our electorates—receive support payments similar to those that were previously provided. These payments are no longer there, leaving the small businesses most in need with no support.

I have written to the Treasurer and the Minister for Small Business in the hope that they will come to the table and ensure small business owners are also looked after and given the assistance they require. I again urge the Minister to do the right thing by the people of New South Wales and allow the most vulnerable small business owners to participate in the 2022 support program by easing its restrictive requirements—and they are restrictive. You do not build a strong economy by neglecting your small business community. We need to make sure that nobody is left behind during this incredibly difficult time.