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BUSINESSES CALL FOR HELP AMID ENERGY CRISIS

The region's peak business advocacy group, Business Illawarra is today using the release of an energy policy report by its parent organisation to call for help for local business struggling with the extremely high price of energy at a time that business conditions and confidence are being tested due to a wide range of cost pressures.

The Business NSW report, [Unfinished Business: Putting small business energy policy back on the table](#), funded by Energy Consumers Australia's Grants Program contains in-depth analysis of 658 businesses and their efforts to reach net zero emissions and reduce energy costs amid a cost-of-doing business crunch.

It found significant shortcomings in the advice and support businesses receive and that only 15 per cent of businesses get help from energy consultants and peak bodies, which are the best-rated sources of advice.

Business Illawarra Executive Director Adam Zarth said, "businesses remain lost when it comes to lowering their emissions and energy bills – and feel abandoned by state and federal governments – while facing surging gas and electricity prices."

"As small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) face up to a 56 per cent increase in electricity prices this year and next, this report has revealed businesses are crying out for advice that's in short supply."

"This 56 per cent increase in energy costs – together with staff shortages, interest rate rises and red tape - has the potential to sink struggling Illawarra businesses."

"One in five businesses still find the process of switching providers difficult or extremely difficult, showing efforts to simplify energy markets for businesses have further to go."

"The government needs to combine last week's bill relief measures with advice that helps businesses to deal with the complex web of the energy market."

The survey also indicated an appetite among business to move more quickly to reduce their emissions. However, 51 per cent of businesses which have set themselves the target of reaching a net zero emissions target by a specific date also say they have no awareness of the implications of net zero or do not understand how their business specifically will be affected.

"Businesses want to do the right thing, but there is an emerging policy black hole when it comes to support for businesses trying to reduce their energy bills and their emissions."

"While governments are implementing the major system changes to bring online more renewable energy, they also need to make sure that energy users have the support they need to make the necessary changes to their own operations to reduce emissions, lower energy bills and keep businesses thriving," Mr Zarth said.

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Business Illawarra Media Contact – Adam Zarth 0404 146 829

About Business Illawarra

Formerly the Illawarra Business Chamber, *Business Illawarra* is the region's peak business organisation, and the regional office of Business NSW responsible for the south-east of the state, including the Southern Highlands.