

# Push for Govt to extend Covid support to business

**Andrea Fox**

An Auckland Business Chamber Covid petition asking the Government to support businesses in the same way as employees attracted more than 7000 signatures within hours of its launch.

Chamber chief executive Michael Barnett said the petition to Finance Minister and Deputy Prime Minister Grant Robertson was launched at 11am yesterday on the basis that with Auckland likely to be locked down for a further two weeks it was time employers were offered a similar package to that offered to employees.

“If business claim the wage subsidy for employees it means they should pay the employees 80 per cent of their wage.

“For business this means the employers are topping up the Government subsidy at a time where they have no revenue coming in. On top of this cost, business has its weekly overheads of rent, rates, . . . and a range of other costs.

“The Government does offer a one-off resurgence payment, however if you look at this, it’s equivalent to about 60 per cent of one week’s overheads. As the Government extends the lockdown employers need the same recognition as employees.”

Barnett said the aim was to send a message to Government that these are tough times for business.

“We have been asked to pause business so that Government can implement their elimination strategy for the good of New Zealand so a continuation of the resurgence package is not a big ask.”

Barnett said businesses needed to

keep staff for when the country emerged from Covid restrictions but they were doing it from their own pocket when no cash was coming in.

Businesses also had the weekly costs to meet of rents, rates, hire purchase and power bills - costs that were coming out of their pockets.

“There are dollars going out and none coming in.

“Businesses will very quickly become cash poor.”

The petition, which closes on Friday, had been launched through the northern chamber of commerce hub, comprising chambers in the

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Michael Barnett

upper North Island, but by mid-Monday afternoon had quickly gathered support through social media channels, Barnett said.

The Government resurgence support payment is a one-off payment to help support viable and ongoing businesses or organisations due to a Covid-19 alert level increase to level 2 or higher.

The wage subsidy is a payment to support employers so they can continue to pay employees and protect jobs for businesses affected by the move to alert level 4 on August 17.

To qualify for the subsidy, businesses must have had, or predict, at least a 40 per cent decline in revenue attributed to the move to level 4 over a period of 14 consecutive days between August 17 to 31 inclusive.