

## Chief Executive's Report

This is an unprecedented time. I know this is becoming a worn-out phrase, but it is important to acknowledge just how challenging it has been for everyone, particularly those in our business community.

We are already seeing businesses on the Coast having to make the difficult decision to close shop.

The unfortunate reality is not every business will be able to survive the impact of COVID-19. This is no reflection on the business owners and their staff, how hard they have worked or how sound their business ideas have been – sometimes unforeseen circumstances ruin even the best laid plans.

The current situation is already having a significant impact on employment on the Coast. The latest figures from MSD show there was an increase of 270 people registered for Jobseeker support between 20 March to 24 April. 7.5% of our working age population are now receiving Jobseeker support - up 1.4% from the start of the year.

Unfortunately, these numbers are likely to get worse once the Government's 12-week wage subsidy scheme runs out, and businesses take a hard look at their long-term viability and decide whether they can continue or will have to close either temporarily or permanently. Next weeks budget may provide some additional government support for small businesses to mitigate this.

These difficult decisions will be unavoidable for some. To help businesses through this process, we recently hosted a webinar with a panel of experts on how to put your business into hibernation. We will be holding a similar webinar in a couple of weeks to help inform people on best practices for mothballing their business and how they can utilise the Government's debt hibernation scheme.

While it is tough to see businesses going through such challenges, we are also seeing innovative Coasters adapting to the situation and working to support each other.

Just last week PM Ardern highlighted West Coast initiatives and collaboration in her 'Kiwi ingenuity' spotlight.

We have seen Coast businesses pivoting their production lines to meet new demands, such as producing hand sanitiser and protective face shields.

And we have also seen many of our cafes, restaurants and retailers adapting to the regulations required to operate under Level 3 - from businesses quickly setting up ecommerce stores to a takeaway shop serving customers through a cat door. There has been a lot of Coast ingenuity on display.

These businesses are the heart and soul of our communities. To help them adapt to the changing environment and the additional costs it brings with it, DWC set up a Delivery Rebate Scheme - it's not too late to apply. And if your business needs any help setting up an



ecommerce store, we encourage you to get in contact with us.

To help promote businesses who are back operating we have worked with EPIC Westport and Tai Poutini Polytechnic to set up an online directory showcasing Coast businesses. The response to this has been fantastic with over 210 businesses already registered on www.nowopen.co.nz.

We are also running a 'Keep it Coastal, Support Local' campaign to encourage Coasters to shop locally and support one another. This includes a number of great 'book now, do later' deals for when travel restrictions within our region are lifted. We also have a 'Book a Best Coast Holiday' campaign ready to launch once New Zealand shifts to Alert Level 2.

DWC is leading an Economic Recovery Steering Group, chaired by Rob Caldwell, with Iwi, DOC, the Provincial Development Unit, TPP and the Regional Council. The group is meeting regularly to look at the key COVID-19 related economic issues affecting our region, coordinating West Coast recovery needs, and working on a further package to take to Government.

As a subgroup of this, a Tourism Recovery Group has also been set up to work on transforming our tourism industry for a post COVID-19 environment. The West Coast tourism industry will likely be much smaller for some time, but hopefully better and more robust. This group includes representatives from across the region and is working on developing a West Coast destination management plan, as well as a short term promotional campaign to showcase the fantastic West Coast attractions to the domestic market.

This has been an immensely challenging time for everyone. But it has been incredibly heartening to see Coasters supporting each other through it all. We look forward to shifting to Level 2 and seeing more of our businesses able to operate again.

**Heath Milne | Chief Executive**

## COVID-19 Business Support

If your business is being impacted by COVID-19, contact DWC to discuss your individual circumstances. We're here to help you get through.

info@dwc.org.nz | 0800 768 0140

### Small business cashflow loan scheme

Inland Revenue will provide interest-free loans for a year to small businesses impacted by the COVID-19 economic shock.

The Small Business Cashflow Loan Scheme will provide assistance of up to \$100,000 to firms employing 50 or fewer full-time equivalent employees.

Loans will be interest-free if they are paid back within a year. The interest rate will be 3% for a maximum term of five years. Repayments are not required for the first two years.

Applications will open on 12 May and will be managed by Inland Revenue.

If your business does not meet the above criteria, but has a viable future, please contact DWC as we may be able to provide assistance.

### COVID-19 wage subsidy

The Government's wage subsidy is available to employers, contractors, sole traders, NGOs and incorporated societies that are significantly impacted by COVID-19.

If eligible, employers would be paid \$585.80 per week for full-time staff and \$350 for part-time. They will be paid in a lump sum. The support will be available for 12 weeks.

Businesses must have taken active steps to mitigate the impact of COVID-19, and must make their best efforts to retain employees and pay them a minimum of 80% of their normal income for the subsidised period.

If you experience any difficulties applying for the wage subsidy, please let the team at DWC know.

**Register online:**  
[www.workandincome.govt.nz](http://www.workandincome.govt.nz)

### Doing business under COVID-19 Alert Level 2

The Government has provided further details on what Level 2 will look like for business.

Under Level 2 restaurants, cafes, hairdressers and shops will be able to re-open and domestic travel can restart - but we 'must play it safe'.

#### Golden Rules for Business when we shift to Alert Level 2

Do everything you can to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission at work – we all have a part to play in keeping each other safe.

- COVID-19 is still out there. Play it safe.
- All businesses can operate if they can do so safely. Alternative ways of working are still encouraged where possible.
- Talk with your workers to identify risks and ways to manage them.
- Ask everyone, workers, contractors and customers, with cold or flu-like symptoms to stay away from your premises.
- Keep groups of customers 1 metre apart.
- Keep contact-tracing records of anyone who will have close interaction (workers, contractors or customers).
- Reduce the number of shared surfaces, and regularly disinfect them.
- Wash your hands. Wash your hands. Wash your hands.

**covid19.govt.nz**



## Development West Coast Delivery Rebate Scheme

Businesses across the West Coast that have been offering deliveries during COVID-19 Level 3, may be eligible for a rebate of up to \$250 per business from Development West Coast.

"We know our retailers, cafes and restaurants have been doing it tough, and we want to offer some help," says DWC chief executive Heath Milne.

"Under Level 3, many of these businesses were able to start operating again, but in a slightly different manner either through contactless pickups or deliveries."

"To help businesses who have had to adapt to these circumstances we have set up a 'Delivery Rebate Scheme'"

"So, for example, if you are a restaurant that has been doing takeaways or a retailer or local artisan sending your products off to customers by courier, you may be eligible to receive a rebate of \$5 for each delivery."

The rebate is only available for sales and deliveries made over the scheduled two weeks of Alert Level 3 (Tuesday 28 April to Monday 11 May 2020).

Invoices for the rebate payment must be received by DWC no later than 30 May 2020.

**Contact: info@dwc.org.nz**

## NowOpen.co.nz

As the country continues to rally together to stop the spread of COVID-19, an online resource is enabling Coasters to shop safely and support local businesses.

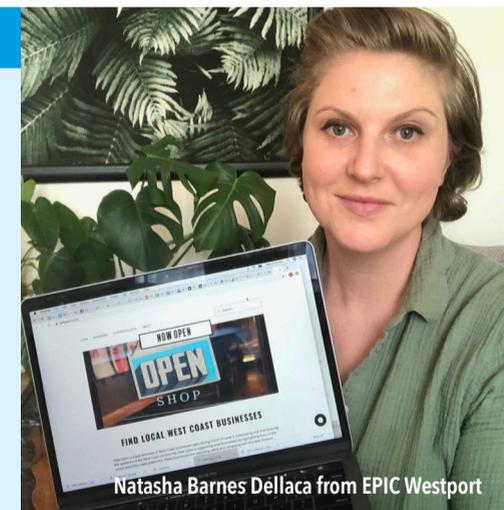
A collaboration between EPIC Westport, DWC and Tai Poutini Polytechnic (TPP) led to the development of www.NowOpen.co.nz, an online business directory and a companion app (Eats | Now Open) championing West Coast businesses operating during the COVID-19 crisis.

The directory of over 210 West Coast businesses aims to let the public know which businesses are open for delivery and contactless pickups and other safe services.

"COVID-19 is bringing a lot of changes to our lives. It's also highlighting what is important. Our local communities, our small businesses, our community organisations have responded and adapted to meet this challenge," says Natasha Barnes Dellaca CEO of innovation hub EPIC Westport.

"We wanted to support these efforts by creating a directory to show who is open and remind ourselves of the great things we can access on the West Coast, lockdown or not."

TPP Leader - Engagement Mequa Hourston encouraged the public to make the most of the online directory and shop locally.



Natasha Barnes Dellaca from EPIC Westport

"We've all had to adapt to a new way of living and working and we know it has been a huge challenge for local businesses. As one of the West Coast's largest employers, TPP wanted to support this initiative to spur business activity and support the region's economy."

Heath Milne says this project has been a true testament to collaboration - Coasters working together to support each other. The website has already been praised by the PM and featured on TVNZ Breakfast.