

## **BusinessNZ Covid-19 Advocacy 2020**

### **February – April 2020**

- BusinessNZ became the earliest (late January) source of information for businesses and their communities, advising members by email and website about health and safety requirements, handwashing, ventilating workplaces, masks and protective gear, steps for a suspected infection and how to manage sick leave.
- Asked for Government Departments to pay New Zealand suppliers within 10 days to provide cashflow to businesses supplying goods and services to Government (= \$40b of payments a year). This was achieved with a letter from the State Services Commission to Government Department CEOs confirming they would be required to pay domestic suppliers within 10 days.
- Sought a Business Finance Guarantee Scheme to assist small and medium businesses, similar to the Australian scheme. The Government agreed terms with the banks and delivered (24 March), enabling firms \$250k-\$80m turnover to access up to \$500k.
- Achieved the reclassification of payroll and IT staff as critical workers, allowing them to enter their workplaces to ensure people got paid and remote systems remained operating to allow people to work from home.
- BusinessNZ and Buy NZ Made invited 1200 manufacturing companies to begin manufacturing masks and personal protection.
- Buy NZ Made listed mask manufacturers on its website so New Zealanders could buy face masks online (currently over 200,000 website hits).
- BusinessNZ helped manufacturers capable of producing masks get classified as essential businesses.

### **May - July 2020**

- Advocated for interest-free cashflow support for small business (Small Business Cashflow Loan Scheme delivered 1 May).
- Sought extension to the wage subsidy scheme removing the 150k cap to enable all businesses to access it (delivered 14 May).
- Continued to work with businesses to identify issues with the scheme; one day after the announcement of the revised scheme it was further amended to clarify employers' obligations regarding part time staff.

- Sought extension of the wage subsidy scheme for hardest hit sectors - and also for changing the threshold for the wage subsidy extension from 50% revenue decline to 40% revenue decline (delivered 5 June).
- Advocated to Ministers and MBIE to get further clarity on essential business requirements - worked with individual businesses in putting their case forward and ensuring they were being treated fairly under the rules. Staff of BusinessNZ network embedded in MBIE taking an active role in decision making processes.
- Along with the Institute of Directors, advocated for and achieved amendment to the rules around trading while insolvent to ensure a six-month safe harbour in Covid conditions similar to the Australian rules.
- Worked with WorkSafe and the Health and Safety Business Leaders Forum on guidelines for businesses to operate under Covid 19 conditions.

### **August – October 2020**

- Sought extensions to the Business Finance Guarantee Scheme to cover more businesses (achieved 20 August).
- Extension to the duration of work visas for overseas workers.
- Clarity and certainty on the criteria for moving through different alert levels and what businesses are able to do at different levels.
- Worked with PM Advisor Rob Fyfe on identifying manufacturers that are available for manufacturing PPE to standards and at scale.
- Advocated for more manufacturers to be able to operate where they can easily meet Covid operating conditions and are suppliers to essential businesses.
- Sought amendments to the Government procurement rules to ensure that when Government are buying, they are to the greatest extent possible buying from New Zealand companies.