



BUSINESSES SUFFERING HUGE LOSSES SAY YOU'RE #SAFEWITHUS

Owner of Dubbo's Church Street Café (CSC) Errin Williamson said she lost 70% of her regular revenue, when her businesses was listed as a COVID-19 exposure site, when two COVID-positive people who had ignored lock-down order from Melbourne stopped in for a meal. Errin's team has been extremely proactive throughout the pandemic, with COVIDSafe 'queens' ensuring customers have a safe experience in her café. As a result, there were no positive cases of COVID-19 in the area as a result of the close contacts from Melbourne – a testament to CSC's, and other local businesses', commitment to enforcing their COVIDSafe Plan.

However, despite there being no positive cases confirmed from the region, businesses are still suffering, three weeks later. In a great show of support for one another, businesses across the Dubbo Region are joining forces in the wake of the latest COVID-19 outbreak and restrictions, to encourage locals and visitors not affected by the state's stay-at-home orders to continue visiting their local shops in a COVIDSafe

way. The #SafeWithUs hashtag was the brainchild Errin Williamson and Melbourne business Foodie Coaches, and is being supported by Dubbo Regional Council (DRC) and the local business community.

“Despite our COVIDSafe plan, and the fact everyone was safe and nobody tested positive, and we were deemed safe to continue trading, it unfortunately didn’t stop the bad press that came with being ‘named and shamed’ as the COVID-café. The flow-on effect of this can be super devastating to small businesses. We’ve seen a drop of about 70% in sales, and other impacted businesses in Dubbo have reported a similar potentially devastating trend,” said Errin.

Next door to CSC is local clothing boutique Klou, and owner Sophia Acheson says she has also noticed a large decline in foot traffic since the COVID-positive travellers passed through the Dubbo Region. She hopes the #SafeWithUs campaign will encourage locals and regional visitors to keep coming to stores and buying locally. “I hope it gets people out and about, and that everyone knows businesses in our region are COVIDSafe, and they have COVIDSafe plans, there’s QR codes at the entrances along with hand sanitizer, shops and restaurants are cleaned; and that we are safe and we want people to come out and shop locally,” said Ms Acheson.

DRC’s Economic Development Officer Shannon Starr says Council has jumped on board to support local businesses through a social media campaign, encouraging people to mask up and continue supporting local businesses and tourism operators. “For every \$100 spent in Dubbo on food and beverage services, like our cafes and restaurants – the on flow of that spend multiplies to \$193 for the overall economy. The money that locals spend in local stores, employs people who earn wages, who then

spend their wages on local offerings and so on. Spending locally during these times is so important, when comparing local spending to buying online the flow-on impacts of online spending to your neighbours, your friends, the people we see in our communities every day is much less,” said Ms Starr.

Through the #SafeWithUs social media campaign, residents and visitors are encouraged to support local businesses by having a meal out or shopping local these school holidays. Business can get on board and share a Facebook story from their business account, with the hashtag #SafeWithUs, and tag @DubboRegionIgnite to be featured,” said Ms Starr

Last Edited: 17 Jul 2023