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**NATIONAL JOBS & SKILLS SUMMIT:
WE ALL HAVE A ROLE TO PLAY, SAYS BUSINESS ILLAWARRA**

The region's peak business organisation, Business Illawarra, has said that the success of the National Jobs & Skills Summit will be measured by delivery on the 36 initiatives developed by government, employers, unions and community advocates.

"With the Summit done, now is the time to implement meaningful policy measures to address the challenges facing our economy and the health of our business sector," said Business Illawarra Executive Director Adam Zarth.

Business Illawarra welcomed commitments from the Summit to tackle workforce shortages, with a recent Business NSW [Skills Survey](#) demonstrating that 9 out of 10 businesses were facing worker shortages.

"There's no doubt the Illawarra is in the grips of a workforce shortage crisis, with record low unemployment at 2.3 percent and record high job vacancies over 3,000 at last count," said Mr Zarth.

"At the recent Illawarra Skills and Jobs Forum hosted by our local members of parliament, Business Illawarra brought forward proposals to both increase migration and get local people back into work in order to fill the shortages of key workers we have here in the region."

"It has been pleasing to see action on these fronts coming out of the national summit, including measures to increase the permanent migration cap from 160,000 to 195,000, a \$36.1 million boost in departmental funding to clear visa backlogs, and the relaxation of work restrictions on international students; which will be particularly welcomed in a university region like ours."

"It's also great to see the Prime Minister signal that the government will allow pensioners to increase their earnings from paid work without losing any of their pension. There is detail to work through here, but this is a ready made workforce who are ready and willing to lend a hand in the short to medium term across so many industries."

"We have always said our homegrown skills pipeline is a critical piece of the puzzle when it comes to addressing our worker shortage and so the announcement that Commonwealth and State governments will come together in a \$1.1 billion injection to deliver an extra 180,000 fee free TAFE places is terrific news, and we would like to see this extended to include independent training providers to supercharge the rollout."

"We know that a critical shortage of available housing is exacerbating workforce shortages locally and nationally, and so while additional funding for the National Housing Infrastructure Facility is a good start, we know that more regionalised policy changes across all levels of government will be needed to see any near-term improvement to this situation."

"We simply do not have the workers to meet the needs of our businesses and these coordinated measures are critical in ensuring we are on the front foot when it comes to attracting talent to our shores in a globally competitive environment."

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About Business Illawarra

Formerly the Illawarra Business Chamber, *Business Illawarra* is the region's peak business organisation; a not-for-profit advocacy group dedicated to the economic development of the Illawarra.