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Business Hunter welcomes new Liberal leader

Business Hunter has congratulated the new NSW Opposition Leader Kellie Sloane and looks forward to working with her to ensure the priorities of business and the Hunter region are front of mind for the State Coalition.

Business Hunter CEO Bob Hawes said that with certainty on energy policy a key issue for the region, he hoped Ms Sloane would maintain her party's bipartisan position on the Electricity Infrastructure Roadmap and other key transition initiatives.

"It is important for existing business and investors to have a clear transition pathway and we hope that stability on this issue at state level will continue," Mr Hawes said.

"Ms Sloane has said she supports an equitable rollout of renewables but is also mindful that ensuring energy reliability and affordability is the priority."

Mr Hawes said he expected Ms Sloane, as a former businesswoman, would be a strong advocate for business, ensuring business needs and priorities were recognised and addressed by the State Government.

"Our members consistently say insurance costs, government taxes and charges and energy costs are the top three concerns for their business," Mr Hawes said.

"Workers compensation, in particular, is a crushing financial burden on businesses and the state coffers. We urge the Coalition to take advantage of this renewed opportunity to pass the workers' compensation reforms currently before Parliament before the Christmas break.

"This straightforward change will not only save businesses from going under, but will also inject much-needed confidence for the more than 320,000 businesses which pay these premiums.

"There are also significant opportunities to improve insurance costs by abolishing the emergency services levy, reinstating Business Connect and working to drive down the cost of energy."

Mr Hawes acknowledged outgoing Opposition Leader Mark Speakman.

"I want to thank Mark Speakman for his service. We hosted him for a business forum in the Hunter only two weeks ago and he was characteristically open and genuine in his comments and interactions with our members.

"Public service requires significant sacrifices and he held the role with integrity and purpose."

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