

Funds frustration

Business owner says closure could have been avoided

FRUSTRATION has been expressed about restrictive conditions placed on Just Transition funding following the recent closure of two long-standing Collie businesses.

Sportfirst and Collie Canvas and

Camping World have closed doors in recent months, but had funding been available they could well still be servicing the community and employing local staff.

At issue is a stipulation that funding cannot be used to assist with the purchase of existing businesses. A government spokesperson has confirmed small grants are solely available to support new business opportunities.

Kaylene Evans believes Collie Canvas and Camping World, which she and husband Gary ran for 32 years, would still be operating under new ownership had funding been available.

Mrs Evans said one potential buyer had made enquiries about securing funding, but had been told purchase of the business did not meet the criteria.

“It was very frustrating for him and us,” she said.

The buyer had been told an application could be made for funding to expand the business after its purchase, Mrs Evans added.

“But if the business isn’t there, it can’t grow,” she said.

“If that funding was there for someone to be able to purchase it in the first place, then they have the opportunity then to grow it further.”

Responding to *Bulletin* enquiries, the spokesperson confirmed funding can be applied for once purchase of a business has been separately negotiated.

But this does raise the prospect of potential buyers instead opting to wait for a business to close doors before applying for funding to start a similar venture.

Mrs Evans said it is unfortunate that jobs have been lost due to the recent closures.

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CITIZEN OF THE YEAR

Alan Bowers was named Citizen of the Year at the Shire of Collie’s Australia Day ceremony in Central Park last Friday. Alan is pictured with the Ferret Mark II scout car he helped restore for the Collie-Car diff RSL.

Story page 11.

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page 2.



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