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## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **Retail “turning the corner” amid lower demand for rental assistance**

- 12,000+ SME retailers have received rental assistance from SCCA members up to the end-of-September, up from 10,045 at the end-of-July.
- Improved retail trading conditions, including easing government restrictions, increased foot traffic, store openings and retail spending, has seen a turnaround in the need for rental assistance provided to retailers with the rate of rental assistance now trending down.
- ~80% of rent relief requests have been agreed to, with the outstanding 20% lacking the required documentation, proof of reduction in turnover or the reasonable request threshold.

The Shopping Centre Council of Australia today released new data confirming that requests for rental assistance from SME retailers are in decline as retail trading improves, consumer confidence returns, and foot traffic increases heading into the busy Christmas trading period.

SCCA Executive Director Angus Nardi said: “The need for retail rental assistance has passed a critical turning point as retail trading conditions pickup and consumers return to stores.”

“All the key indicators are up, with foot traffic and store openings sitting at 95% and continuing to increase, average retail spend per visit is also increasing and Santa photos are being booked out as the Christmas trading peak approaches.

“Throughout the pandemic our members have continued to provide valuable rental assistance to retailers, with nearly \$2 billion of rental assistance provided to approximately 12,000 SME retailers,” said Mr Nardi.

“While some closures and restrictions such as maximum patron capacity remain in place, restrictions for retail, hospitality and other categories have largely eased across the country”.

“Every step towards normalised COVID-safe trading gives a boost to retail, whether it’s lifting patron limits or reducing the one person per four square metre density rule as we’ve seen in some jurisdictions,”

“We strongly believe there is no evidence to justify any further extension of the Code of Conduct beyond December in jurisdictions such as Victoria, NSW and Queensland. It has served the purpose it was conceived for when we developed it with retailer groups in March.”

Mr Nardi said most retailers had opted out of rental assistance, but some opportunistic traders were gaming the system.

“Continuing the code in the current favourable trading conditions has allowed some retailers to game the system and draw landlords into unnecessary stalemates,” said Mr Nardi.

“Our focus should be on getting everyone open and continuing to provide a COVID Safe and secure environment guided by public health principles, not bartering on rental agreements”.

The shopping centre has developed detailed industry COVID Safe Plan and guidance on issues such as shopping centre operations, food courts, face masks and Santa photos as part of the lead-up to Christmas.

**Ends**

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