New Advisory Service for Small Businesses

New South Wales

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MASTER ELECTRICIANS AUSTRALIA

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Small businesses face growing compliance, administrative, and financial pressures, often required to meet regulatory, legislative, financial, operational, and work health and safety obligations on a level playing field with much larger organisations that have significantly greater resources.

The introduction of a Small Business Advisory Service presents an opportunity to provide practical, accessible support to help business owners manage these competing demands, respond to industry risks, and take advantage of growth opportunities.

Designed effectively, the advisory service can become a valuable enabling tool for small business. However, it is important that it enhances and complements existing channels and frameworks rather than duplicating them. It should act as a genuine first-point triage and navigation function, helping to connect small businesses to the right existing government services quickly and efficiently, rather than becoming just another contact point among many.

Ultimately, it should serve as the recognisable "front door" for small business within government, providing clear, timely, and practical support that simplifies access to advice and improves the overall user experience.

What Support Will Make the Biggest Difference to Small Businesses?

- Streamlined Information – This could be delivered in a practical way by signposting and linking to relevant pages across existing agency websites, rather than duplicating content, ensuring information remains current, authoritative, and easy to maintain.

- Compliance Support - Practical examples for businesses on how to comply with key regulatory requirements, identifying what compliance looks like. Topics could include WHS, licensing, tax, and employment laws to reduce compliance risk and administrative burden.

- Business Resilience and External Shock Support - Assistance for businesses impacted by unexpected external shocks (e.g. economic downturns, supply issues, disasters) including guidance on relief options and recovery planning.

- Cybersecurity – Basic, accessible support to help small businesses protect systems and data, including risk awareness, prevention strategies, and incident response guidance.

- Digital Tools Training - Training to help small businesses adopt and effectively use digital systems for scheduling, invoicing, payroll, and business management.

- Small Business Dispute Support – Enhanced access and navigation support to existing dispute resolution pathways, helping businesses more quickly identify the right service, prepare documentation, and progress matters through mediation or resolution processes.

- Systemic Issue Identification and Escalation –Aggregate and report common small business queries, pain points, and recurring barriers to relevant government departments for review and action. This would help identify systemic issues early (e.g. regulatory confusion, delays, inconsistent guidance), improve policy responsiveness, and reduce repeated administrative burden on both small businesses and frontline agencies.

What Core Skills or Advice do Small Businesses Need at Different Stages?

- Start-Up Stage – Business setup basics, structure selection, licensing, pricing foundations, and compliance essentials to get operating correctly from day one. Also providing advice on easy mistakes to avoid.

- Early Trading Stage - Cashflow management, quoting and invoicing systems, customer acquisition, and building reliable operational processes.

- Growth Stage - Scaling operations, hiring and managing staff, systems automation, and improving profitability and margins.

- Established Stage – Business efficiency, industry problems, unexpected shocks.

- High-Growth / Expansion Stage - Financing growth, tendering for larger work, supply chain management, and managing increased compliance complexity.

- Mature Stage – Succession planning, exit strategies, business valuation, and preparing for sale or transition.

- Financial Difficulty Stage - Urgent cashflow stabilisation support, debt restructuring guidance, payment plan negotiation strategies, and access to hardship assistance options, with practical help prioritising essential obligations and keeping the business viable.

- Ongoing Support - Ongoing support in compliance, cashflow, digital tools, dispute resolution, and adapting to regulatory or market change.

How Do Small Business Owners Prefer to Access Support?

- Human Support – Direct access to a real advisor for urgent or complex issues, rather than automated systems.

- Phone / Online Access - Easy access to advice via phone or online channels, reducing the need for in-person visits; particularly important for construction and trade business owners who are often on-site with limited flexibility to attend physical appointments.

- Email Support - Written advice and follow-up for queries or documentation-heavy issues, providing a clear record trail for accuracy, reference, and accountability.

- On-Demand Webinars - Short, practical sessions focused on immediate business needs that business owner can listen to a time that suits them.

- Single Front Door with Industry Pathways - A frontline advisory system that can quickly identify common or routine queries and direct users to readily available, authoritative answers (e.g. ATO for tax matters, licensing portals for compliance requirements). This would reduce unnecessary workload on government departments, while ensuring small businesses receive faster answers without needing to wait for manual responses or navigate multiple agencies.