



Annual Report 2015

Our support Your success

Contents



Message from the Minister for Small Business	3
Message from the NSW Small Business Commissioner	4
Creating Change for Small Business in NSW	6
Proactively Working with Stakeholders	7
Case Study: Productive Conversations	9
Solving Problems	10
Get Back to Business	11
Expansion of Dispute Resolution	12
Case Study: Don't Suffer in Silence	13
Case Study: Newsagents Assistance	14
Helping Your Business Thrive and Grow	15
2015 Premier's Award	16
Our Customers	17
Case Study: Paving the Way for Success	18
Multicultural Initiatives	19
Case Study: An Appetite for Business	20
Small Biz Bus	21
Going the Distance	22
Benefits of Regional Activation	23
Case Study: Taking Social Media by Storm	24
Small Business Friendly Councils	25
Case Study: Tamworth is Tapping into Small Business	26
Our Focus for the Future	27

Some images in this report are for illustrative purposes only.

Message from the Minister for Small Business

It is without a doubt that small businesses are vital, not only to the NSW economy, but also to the sense of community that they bring to metropolitan and regional centres.

One of our most valuable assets is the drive and creativity that the 680,000 small businesses bring to our state. Also, with an increasing number of entrepreneurs taking to the business stage in NSW, there is a growing movement of innovation, where business-savvy and tech-savvy mindsets are shaping the future.

It is an exciting time for the NSW Government to foster business talent and expand upon entrepreneurship in NSW. I want to share in the success of all small businesses and budding entrepreneurs, and as Minister for Small Business, I endeavour to make it easier for you to start up, scale up your business model, and to innovate.

NSW is known as being a dynamic centre of innovation and opportunity and the NSW Government is dedicated to facilitating, listening to business, removing barriers and targeting support where it's needed. I not only want to see small businesses survive, but more importantly, I want to see them grow and thrive. Now is the time to innovate, build and grow.

As a former small businessman, I firmly believe getting into business is one of the most rewarding and worthwhile careers anybody can choose to have. Your business becomes part of who you are and I know the challenges and sacrifices that come with running a small business.



Yet with challenges and sacrifices often comes reward and satisfaction, so remain focused on your business aspirations and believe in your business model.

The NSW Government is committed to working with small businesses, startups and entrepreneurs to assist you in your goals, endeavours and the future of your business. To all business entrepreneurs that make the choice to conquer the challenges and stay focused on success, your enthusiasm and dedication are an integral part of our future and for this, I thank you.

The Hon. **John Barilaro MP**

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read 'John Barilaro'. The signature is fluid and cursive.

Message from the NSW Small Business Commissioner

It is an exciting time to be a small business or entrepreneur in NSW. Small business is an incredibly diverse sector which transcends industries, captures an impressive variety of business people and is constantly evolving.

The contribution small entities make to the economy and our communities is clear. No matter how these businesses are defined, we recognise that they are the heart and soul of our communities, the backbone of our local economies and our services are designed to support them.

The passion, innovation and dedication business people invest is truly inspiring and it is a privilege to work alongside them, empowering them with information, support and assistance. Business is a journey and the Office of the NSW Small Business Commissioner (OSBC) is devoted to being there every step of the way.

Through a range of specialised programs and services we are helping to make sure that in NSW, ideas can become a reality, businesses start out strong, opportunities are embraced and any problems are nipped in the bud.

In 2015, our reach across NSW has really taken shape and our services have expanded to capture more businesses.

As an example, in 2011 our dispute resolution services were primarily assisting with retail leasing concerns, where now over 30% of questions relate other business disputes.

A number of successful pilot programs have evolved to become new pillars of our support services reaching regional NSW and multicultural communities.



As the team looks ahead to 2016, we are investigating new opportunities to engage with this sector, in particular how to maximise digital advances.

Customers' needs and wants are at the centre of our service design and delivery. Being awarded the 2015 Premier's Award for Customer Focussed Delivery was a highlight of the year.

Our achievements in 2015 are a collaborative effort and I would like to make special mention of our Small Business Friendly Councils and the many government agencies who have worked with us this year to help make NSW a great place to be in business.

Robyn Hobbs OAM

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Robyn A Hobbs". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being the most prominent.



There are around
680,000 small
businesses in NSW



The NSW small business
sector pays more than
\$41.53 billion* in
annual wages and
salaries



NSW small businesses
employ around 1.51
million* people

Source: ABS
* estimated from ABS
2013-14

Creating Change for Small Business in NSW

As an independent voice for small business within government, the Office of the NSW Small Business Commissioner (OSBC) works closely with a wide range of stakeholders including small business owners, councils, government agencies and industry associations to identify and address the key issues facing various industry sectors.

The OSBC acts as a representative for NSW small businesses on government agency consultations, reviews and reforms and works closely with small businesses and industry to identify regulatory requirements that may place an unnecessary burden or cost on small businesses.

Where appropriate, the OSBC can advocate to ensure small business interests are well represented within government, ensuring that their concerns are effectively communicated.

The OSBC also regularly engages with government agencies to stay abreast of any potential changes to legislation, policy or administrative processes that could impact small businesses in NSW. The OSBC has formed strong relationships with State and Federal agencies and is actively involved in preliminary consultations as policy directions are developed.



2015 Achievements

Submissions to government agencies

-  *Australian Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman Bill 2015 (Commonwealth Government)*
-  *Building and Construction Industry Security of Payment Amendment (Retention Money Trust Account) Regulation 2014 (NSW Government)*
-  *Building Professionals Act Review (NSW Government)*
-  *Competition Policy Review (Commonwealth Government)*
-  *Crowd Sourced Equity Funding consultation paper (Commonwealth Government)*
-  *Draft Strata Schemes Management Bill 2015 and Strata Schemes Development Bill 2015 (NSW Government)*
-  *Exposure Draft Consultation for Extending Unfair Contract Term Protections to Small Businesses (Commonwealth Government)*
-  *Productivity Commission Inquiry into Business Set-up, Transfer and Closure (Commonwealth Government)*
-  *Regional Telecommunications Review (Commonwealth Government)*
-  *ReThink Tax discussion paper (Commonwealth Government)*

Proactively Working with Stakeholders

To collectively engage with stakeholders in 2015, the Office of the NSW Small Business Commissioner (OSBC) hosted representatives from a range of government agencies as part of its biannual government roundtables. These roundtable discussions supplement the collaborative work the OSBC undertakes with individual agencies.



The 2015 roundtable events were an opportunity for all participants to gain a thorough understanding of the policy reform agenda of government agencies and future opportunities to engage and collaborate on matters relevant to small business.

The OSBC also hosted representatives from various industry associations. These forums provided the OSBC with an overview of key industry issues, allowing the OSBC to gain a first hand understanding of the challenges facing small businesses in NSW. The insights gleaned from these events enabled the OSBC to identify challenges, analyse industry trends, discover future opportunities to collaborate, and provide research briefings and advice to the Minister for Small Business.





Top industries we have engaged with:

1
Accommodation & Food Services

2
Retail Trade

3
Construction

4
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing

Top policy areas we have worked on:

1
Administrative burden

2
Planning

3
Building & construction

4
Payroll tax

Case Study: Productive Conversations

The Office of the NSW Small Business Commissioner (OSBC) liaises with industry associations to understand the challenges of their members, enabling it to assist associations to gain traction with larger businesses and government agencies.

In 2015, the OSBC assisted an industry association by contacting one of Australia's largest companies on behalf of the association's small business members. These members had been impacted financially and administratively, following changes to the supply chain agreement that existed between small business suppliers and the company. Some of the small business operators felt they had not been fully informed of the changes prior to signing the new agreement and subsequently were not aware of how the changes could impact their operations. They were also concerned that the company had not communicated their options to them, and as a result the smaller businesses felt compelled to sign the new agreement.

Prior to contacting the OSBC, the industry association had not made representations to the company about the concerns, and they sought OSBC's assistance to facilitate a conversation between the larger company and industry representatives. The OSBC spoke with the CEO and the Executive Team of the larger company and explained the concerns of the small business suppliers directly.

They assured the OSBC and the industry association that the changes to the supply chain were not compulsory and therefore if small businesses felt the change impacted them negatively, they could continue with their current agreement. The company also committed to writing to all of its relevant suppliers, to ensure they were aware of their options under the agreements and of their contribution and value to the industry.

The industry association and the company both acknowledged the importance of protecting their relationships and therefore each committed to working together to investigate the concerns and to continue to build these relationships. The industry association and the company recognised the OSBC for their involvement in facilitating the conversation between the two parties and for handling the matter in a neutral and independent manner.

“The larger company acknowledged that the industry association represented the views of the industry and recognised the need to investigate the concerns further.”



Solving Problems

The Office of the NSW Small Business Commissioner (OSBC) delivers front line services to small businesses seeking information or assistance in dealing with issues threatening their business relationships.

The OSBC provides strategic and procedural advice, manages the Retail Security Bond Scheme, is conducting a statutory review of the *Retail Leases Act 1994*, develops dispute prevention and education materials, and delivers informal and face-to-face mediation.

The OSBC is committed to proactively assisting all clients, whether small businesses, government agencies, or large businesses, to work constructively in preventing or resolving issues at an early stage.

The key benefits of mediation are:

- The parties have greater control over the outcome
- Negotiations in mediation are confidential, and cannot be used in later court cases.
- The mediator appointed is not on anyone's side.
- The majority of matters will resolve before lengthy and expensive court proceedings need to take place.

Mediation Officers

Mediation Officers help stakeholders by encouraging them to consider the different factors contributing to the situation. This includes:

- ➔ provoking them to think about if key information is missing;
- ➔ considering the different ways challenging situations can be perceived or interpreted;
- ➔ considering how to leverage influencers;
- ➔ helping them to focus on reaching a commercial outcome; and also
- ➔ examining their own contribution to the problem at hand.



Get Back to Business

The relationships that make your business work are essential to your business success.

Strong, positive relationships with landlords, suppliers, regulators and other businesses with whom you have a commercial agreement will allow you to focus on your most important task: running your business well.

Problems within relationships, especially those that become disputes, take you away from actually doing business. They cost you time, money, loss of productivity and often great stress.

A key service of the Office of the NSW Small Business Commissioner (OSBC) is to support you when things are going wrong in your business relationships.

You can receive vital strategic and procedural advice to help you determine your best path forward.

As a result, you may find that you can sort things out yourself. If not, our mediation services can assist you constructively to reach agreement with the other party.



Revolutionising the Retail Security Bond Scheme

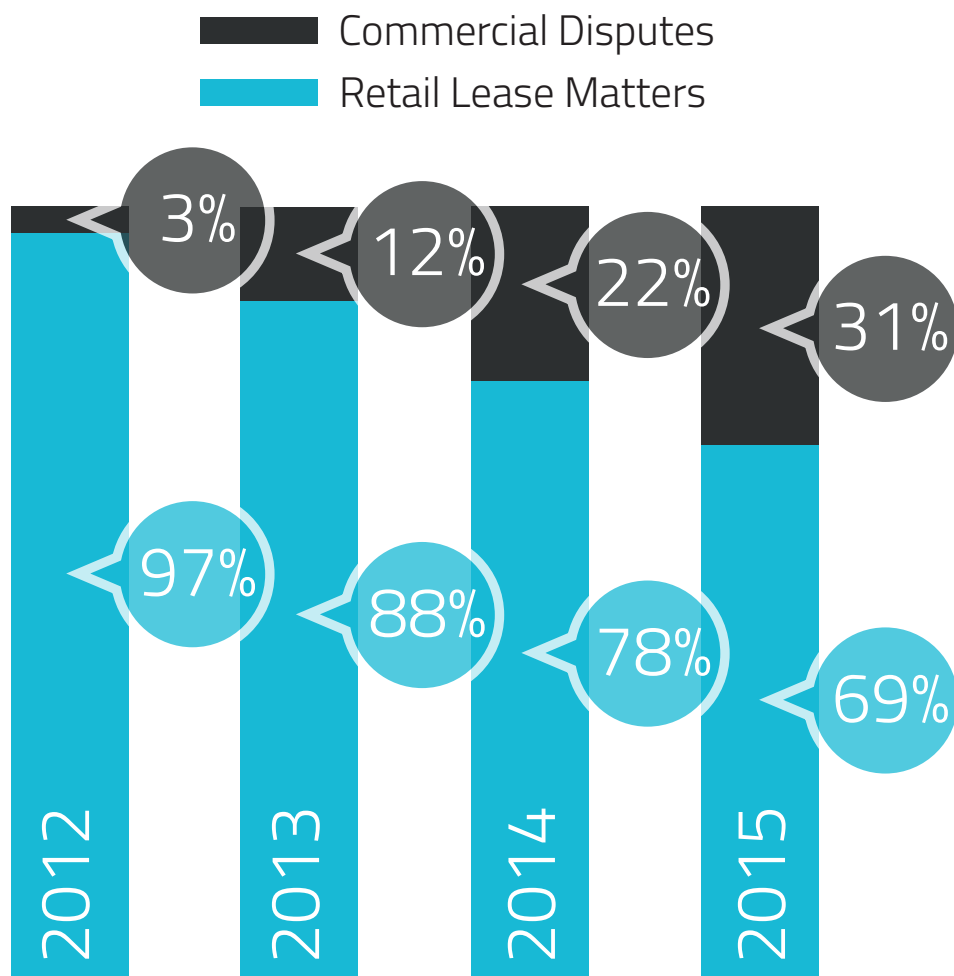
The *Retail Security Bond Scheme* has been challenged over the past 18 months with the number of bond matters handled by the OSBC skyrocketing over that period. As a result an exciting project to develop an online retail security bond scheme is underway.

2015 Achievements

- ✓ Tailored services
 - Engaged with various industry sectors to gain a better understanding of disputes that are specific to particular industries to develop dispute resolution services that meet different industry needs.
- ✓ Outreach
 - Attended NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal for retail leasing directions hearings enabling Mediation Officers to assist parties in arranging mediations or with process queries.
 - Raised awareness of the services available in NSW, through presentations on dispute resolution. These were delivered in conjunction with a variety of other associations, including NSW Fair Trading, legal services associations, local council economic development programs and expos for a number of industries. The presentations covered topics including:
 - Dispute resolution;
 - Business structure;
 - Debt and cash flow management;
 - Contract basics; and
 - Consumer guarantees.

Expansion of Dispute Resolution

The Office of the NSW Small Business Commissioner's Dispute Resolution service is based on the model developed under the *Retail Leases Act 1994*. The expansion of this service into other industry sectors has been underway since the appointment of the NSW Small Business Commissioner. In 2011, only 3% of questions were outside retail leasing concerns, now over 30% of questions relate to non-retail commercial relationships.



Case Study: Don't Suffer in Silence

Throughout 2015, the Office of the NSW Small Business Commissioner (OSBC) received a number of applications for assistance from small businesses complaining about the practices of an organisation in relation to the unfair terms of digital services contracts. The concern was that financially vulnerable small businesses were being targeted primarily in regional areas.

The contract provided by the organisation appeared to be one-sided, and did not contain any time-frame for the provision of services, or obligations in relation to the frequency of the service. The contract allowed the organisation to accept payment in advance for two years of service, without any corresponding obligation for the service delivery. In some instances, the infrastructure for the delivery of the service was not in place during the term of the contract. The failures to supply or the partial supply of a sub-standard service are common complaints of small businesses.

The service organisation initially responded and cooperated in the dispute resolution process, engaging with mediation officers in discussions to provide resolutions that satisfied the applicants. However, the organisation later became non-responsive to the OSBC.

The OSBC undertook research into various Fair Trading services across Australia, with the other Small Business Commissioners and the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC). The OSBC documented the information gathered and the matter was referred to the ACCC. These issues are currently a matter under consideration by the ACCC Enforcement Committee.



Case Study: Newsagents Assistance

The expiration of a five year Agency Protection Period that was put in place with the 2010 privatisation of NSW Lotteries resulted in concern from some NSW newsagents.

The NSW Treasurer, Minister for Small Business, the Office of the NSW Small Business Commissioner (OSBC), Tatts and the Newsagents Association of NSW and ACT (NANA) worked collaboratively to address the issues concerning the industry. The three most significant issues centred on concerns that small business operators would be negatively impacted by:

- major grocery chains beginning to sell lotto products;
- the transition from an agency agreement to a franchise agreement; and
- the cost for newsagents to upgrade their retail lottery image.

The OSBC convened meetings with NANA and Tatts to assist in negotiations regarding the franchise agreement and to ensure the parties understood the others' perspective and concerns.

On 30 January 2015 the NSW Government signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with Tatts Group to provide additional protections for existing agents selling lottery products:

- NSW Lotteries (operated by Tatts) undertook not to expand its network into large supermarket chains before 31 March 2018. However, Tatts was able to expand into the convenience fuel channel; and
- NSW Government set aside funds to provide up to \$10,000 for each existing outlet to update their lottery retail image.

The OSBC administers the payments from the *Newsagents Assistance Fund* with a commitment to ensure payments are made within 14 days of the receipt of a completed application for payment.

The franchise agreements have been in place since the middle of 2015 and while newsagents' concerns about the future remain, there are few complaints being raised about how the relationship is working. Any issues raised are dealt with through the collaborative model developed between the parties.



Helping Your Business Thrive and Grow

The Small Biz Connect Program is a personalised and highly subsidised business advisory program. Small Biz Connect is a contemporary program, which provides high quality, targeted small business advice, resulting in accountability, improved productivity, accelerated growth and measurable outcomes for small businesses across NSW.

Small Biz Connect delivers quality small business advice through an extensive network of mobile Small Biz Connect advisors. Through the Program a small business can get advice on managing their business, access to face-to-face support, and assistance to develop key business skills.

In 2015, 1,400 small business health checks were completed, helping business owners better understand their business and to make informed decisions for the future. Over 11,000 small business owners worked with their local advisor to identify opportunities and potential issues for their business, receiving practical guidance to help their business thrive.

2015 Achievements

- ✓ Ongoing feedback collected from Small Biz Connect clients indicated that 96% were highly satisfied with the Program.
- ✓ The tailored advice and assistance supported two Small Biz Connect clients to become finalists at the prestigious 2015 Telstra Business Awards.
- ✓ The annual advisor conference provided a professional development opportunity for the advisor network as well as acknowledged and celebrated their achievements.



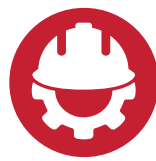
Over 46,000 hours of practical business support was provided to small business owners and operators, throughout NSW.



Over 400 workshops delivered across a range of topics, including business, planning, start-up, social media, marketing and strategic planning.



The top three key issues for businesses across NSW were business planning, start-up and marketing.



The top three industries supported in NSW were:

- Retail Trade
- Professional, Scientific and Technical Services
- Accommodation and Food services.

2015 Premier's Awards

The Office of the NSW Small Business Commissioner (OSBC) was awarded the 2015 Premier's Award for Public Service in the 'Customer Focussed Delivery' category. This award recognises excellence in the delivery of public services to the NSW community.

The nomination for the 'Customer Focussed Delivery' category was based on the delivery of small business support services with customer needs and wants at the heart of program design and delivery.

Through the delivery of tailored programs including Small Biz Connect, Multicultural, Regional Activation, and Small Business Friendly Councils, the OSBC supports small businesses across NSW.

These programs provide thousands of hours of advice and assistance to inspire confidence and improve small business performance.

Accepting the 2015 Premier's Award for Customer Focussed Delivery, NSW Small Business Commissioner, Robyn Hobbs OAM said small businesses throughout NSW were the real winners.

"We are dedicated to inspiring entrepreneurship and offering programs and services to make running a business sustainable and rewarding."



Camden Small Biz Bus visit



Small business advice



Governor of New South Wales visits Parkes businesses



Our Customers

Taree Regional Activation Forum



Riverina Grape Growers and Wine Industry Forum



Mobile business assistance



Case Study:

Paving the Way for Success

As a lover of Australia's finest craft beers, Shannon Kearns had set his sights on running his very own small bar in the historical town of Newcastle.

Shannon Kearns knew that hopping into things too quickly was not the best start to his new venture, so he started work on a business plan and contacted his local Small Biz Connect advisor to check he could transform his big idea and passion into business success.

After reviewing the initial business plan it was clear setting up a small bar was not Shannon's only option, so they distilled the opportunities and instead settled on a new idea.

Shannon set to work crafting his revised business strategy. He would offer one of a kind walking tours around Newcastle's growing craft beer scene, aptly named 'One for the Road'.

By combining his love of craft beer, with his outgoing personality and entrepreneurial spirit, Shannon found the perfect recipe for success.



On the 'Crafty Stroll Beer Tour' craft beers are matched with gourmet local produce and tour goers learn what it takes to create the perfect brew, while discovering Newcastle's extensive history.

Tourists coming in from large cruise liners, weekend holiday makers and locals alike all enjoy the unique tours. Shannon was surprised to learn that the locals were more wowed by the interesting past and fun facts about Newcastle than the visitors.

Shannon is supporting his local community, doing something he's passionate about and giving locals and visitors to Newcastle a great experience.

"Before I started, there was nothing in Newcastle quite like this, even some of the locals weren't aware of the small bars, rich history and world class craft beer," reflected Shannon. "We've created a business that supports the local businesses we care about and I'm proud to be part of the craft beer scene."

"Our tours are a lot of fun, you get to learn about the world of craft beer, food matching and local history and you might just find a hidden gem," he said. "Business advice really helped me assess my options so I could make the best decision for my small business."

Shannon has managed to turn his passion into a thriving business, with a little help from Small Biz Connect. He is currently looking at new tours that will capture the local small bars and expand to the Honeysuckle area.

Multicultural Initiatives

To support multicultural small businesses the Office of the NSW Small Business Commissioner (OSBC) delivers a number of key initiatives. Arabic, Vietnamese, Cantonese, Mandarin and Korean speaking Small Biz Connect business advisors are on the ground in and around Greater Western Sydney. These advisors support multicultural businesses through face-to-face advice and workshops for individual cultural groups.

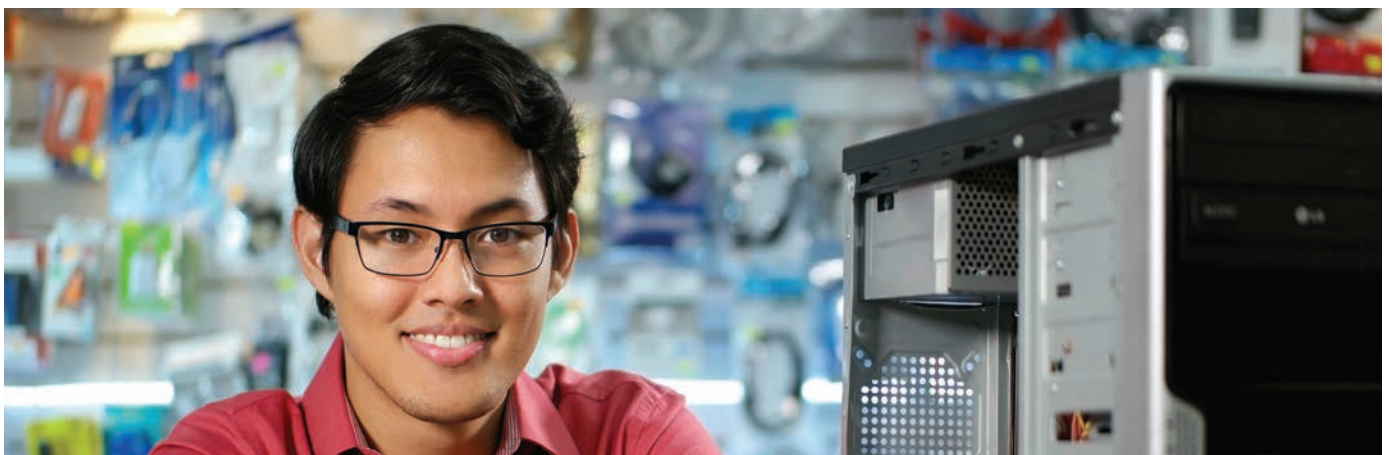
The OSBC multicultural portal provides resources in other languages to assist multicultural small business owners, and includes information about retail and commercial leasing, dispute resolution, key small business resources, compliance information and other small business issues.

In accessing the OSBC's services, multicultural small businesses across NSW are also able to take advantage of interpreting services in over 160 languages and dialects.



2015 Achievements

- ✓ In February 2015, business seminars were held in Merrylands and Wetherill Park to assist the Arabic, Chinese and Vietnamese small business communities.
- ✓ Multicultural advisors have joined the Small Biz Bus on visits to Fairfield, Merrylands, Auburn, Parramatta, and Bankstown, delivering mobile advisory services to local businesses.
- ✓ On 26 August 2015, the Governor of NSW visited the Community Migrant Resource Centre to see the services being provided by Small Biz Connect advisors and meet local multicultural small businesses.



Case Study: An Appetite for Business

Saida Badreddine has always had a passion for food but it wasn't until she met Small Biz Connect Arabic business advisor Gus Nehme that she realised her love of cooking could be a business opportunity.

"Gus gave me support and confidence that I could run my own catering business," said Ms Badreddine.

"He sat down with me and went through all the things I should think about and do in order to start my business. He explained the important considerations of a food business in NSW, and suggested that my first clients should be events and functions that I was familiar with including community meetings and festivals."

"Importantly, he recognised that presentation and styling of food was one of my unique selling points, and that I should develop a pastry finger food offering based on this."

"Gus helped me develop a plan for my business including what I should include in my menu, how I should price it, what resources I would need to cook and promote my food, and how often I should schedule my catering jobs," added Ms Badreddine.

Saida's catering business Sou Sou's Place is doing extremely well, and she is extending her business offering to include cooking classes.

Her long term goal? To have her own Arabic television cooking program. In the short term? To provide creative inspiring food for her clients, and of course to have a successful business.



Small Biz Bus

The Small Biz Bus helps connect small businesses across NSW with local services and their local business advisor providing high-quality mobile business advice. The Small Biz Bus also connects small businesses to government agencies and service providers to deliver new information and advice to the small business community.

During 2015 the Small Biz Bus returned to many locations and also visited new communities in NSW.

Some of the locations the visited in 2015 include Bermagui, Binnaway, Boorowa, Cobar, Cowra, Dorrigo, Frenchs Forest, Gundagai, Jindabyne, Kempsey, Lawson, Menindee, Mount Annan, Narrabri, Raymond Terrace, Rockdale, Singleton, Strathfield, Tumbarumba, Tweed Heads, West Gosford, Wilberforce, Wilcannia, Queanbeyan, Yamba and many more.



In 2015 more than 327 visits were made across NSW with over 70% to regional communities.

2015 Achievements

- ✓ Partnered with NSW Fair Trading and WorkCover at a number of events and locations.
- ✓ Joined the Office of State Revenue to deliver their Small Business Grant seminars in Far West NSW.
- ✓ Provided support to the Central Coast and Hunter flood regions to assist small businesses affected by the floods. The Bus has returned to these areas a number of times since to provide ongoing assistance and advice.
- ✓ Stopped at a number of special events in both regional and metropolitan areas, including Agquip, Australian National Field Days, Country NSW Expo, Goulburn Agriculture Show, Henty Field Days, Liverpool Business Week, Multicultural Days, Murrumbateman Field Days and Reinvent Your Career Expo.



Going the Distance

Through the Regional Activation Program, the Office of the NSW Small Business Commissioner supported the communities of Deniliquin, Gilgandra, Mullumbimby, Batemans Bay, Taree and the Riverina grape growers, activating small business opportunities through specialised programs, assistance and tools.

A focus of the Regional Activation Program (RAP) is to support skills development and the future sustainability of targeted communities. Between March to May 2015, the RAP delivered six specialist workshops on topics tailored to the needs of each local community. Topics included: Getting your business online, social media marketing, women in business and visual merchandising.

Workshops were followed by a one-on-one consultation with a specialist, or a networking and mentoring session, which provided a valuable opportunity for small businesses to receive personalised advice from an expert who may not always be available within their community.

Regional Activation Forums were also held in Batemans Bay, Taree and Deniliquin between October and December 2015. The Forums brought together key State and Federal Government agencies to provide information on regulations, services and support for small business owners and entrepreneurs. The visits also featured a Place Activation Workshop providing communities with the skills to build a productive small business environment with simple suggestions such as encouraging shop owners to place items on the pavements to attract more customers to the main street.



Supporting Riverina Wine and Grape Growers

In May 2015, 15 representatives from 10 State and Federal Government agencies travelled to Griffith to participate in the Riverina Grape Growers and Wine Industry Forum as part of the RAP.

The Forum hosted a Q&A panel discussion, providing growers with the opportunity to discuss issues and seek clarity on areas impacting their businesses. Panel members provided valuable information across a range of topics, including:

- upcoming changes to superannuation arrangements and tools available to support small businesses;
- the ACCC process to investigate claims of misconduct within industry;
- work, health and safety obligations; and
- flexibility within Australian modern awards.



Benefits of Regional Activation

Benefits reported by participating businesses were:



2015 Achievements

- ✓ Seven Regional Activation Forums were held bringing key State and Federal Government agencies with advice and support services, to regional businesses.
- ✓ Six specialist workshops were held in Deniliquin, Mullumbimby and Gilgandra.
- ✓ Over 110 small business operators from more than 90 businesses were supported through the workshops delivered in three regional NSW communities.

Case Study:

Taking Social Media by Storm

Tracie and her husband Coel are partners in CT Johnson Shearing, a business they started 12 months ago. Coel has been shearing since he was 17 and the couple decided it was time to capitalise on his experience and reputation by starting their own operation.

“It’s hard work,” said Tracie, “Every business is challenged with the issues of finding ways to generate new business.”

“The drought has taken a toll on flock sizes and competition can be tough,” she said. “You have to look at different ways to increase revenue and build brand recognition.”

It was the quest to grow the recognition of CT Johnson Shearing that led Tracie to register for one of the Office of the NSW Small Business Commissioner’s Regional Activation Program’s interactive workshops in Deniliquin.

Tracie signed up for a Social Media Workshop even though she was skeptical that her business would benefit from being online at all, let alone in social media.

“This is basically a word of mouth business,” she said. “Being a service business in the agriculture sector, I didn’t think social media and online marketing would have any benefit to us.”

The night after the one-day course, Tracie went home and set up the CT Johnson Shearing Facebook page. Her inaugural post was two pictures. In the first her husband Coel holds an impressively woolly sheep found by the team on a property in Deniliquin. The second picture shows their son dwarfed by the giant fleece that came off the sheep.

Using her newfound social media skills, Tracie shared the picture with other Facebook pages she thought would be interested, including the R.M. Williams Outback magazine page.

The post was then shared over 400 times and as a result it’s been seen by over 150,000 people.



Tracie’s business philosophy is that success relies on continuous learning and in this case that motivation to step outside the norm has paid off in spades. Attending the Social Media Workshop has turned Tracie from a curious skeptic into a believer and has connected CT Johnson Shearing to a new audience.

Her next project, inspired by the success of the CT Johnson Facebook page, is a CT Johnson website including videos and photographs showing the company’s professional shearers in action all over Australia.

Small Business Friendly Councils

Small businesses are benefitting from the Small Business Friendly Councils Program which is making NSW a friendlier place to do business.

To date, 74 councils have committed to cutting red tape and improving local council services representing close to 400,000 small businesses across NSW. This means that around 60% of NSW small businesses now benefit from operating in a small business friendly area.

Councils who sign up agree to a number of benchmarks, committing to paying small businesses on time, establishing a business advisory board and implementing initiatives to foster and support small businesses in their local areas. Examples include:

- ➔ Coffs Harbour City Council trialling a business innovation hub;
- ➔ Bankstown City Council providing information on food safety regulatory requirements in multi-lingual formats;
- ➔ Wakool Shire Council developing a Vibrant Spaces Strategy which aims to enable small businesses to conduct a self-assessment instead of applying for a Development Application for outdoor dining, street signage and market-type stalls outside their shops;
- ➔ Parkes Shire Council developing the 'Sparkles' Christmas campaign to engage local businesses and encourage residents to shop locally; and
- ➔ Woollahra Municipal Council working to stimulate the night time economy in the Double Bay commercial centre.

In April and May 2015, the Office of the NSW Small Business Commissioner delivered six Small Business Friendly Council Conferences across regional and metropolitan NSW including Ballina, Tamworth, Goulburn, Camden, Sydney City and North Sydney.

The conferences provided an opportunity for councils to gain practical advice from industry experts and to hear from a diverse range of speakers. Keynote speakers presented on collaborative strategies to support small business, procurement and public domain activation. These themes were identified by participating councils and further supported their engagement with small businesses.

2015 Achievements

- ✓ 74 councils ranging from large metropolitan councils to small regional councils have committed to participate.
- ✓ Almost 60% of small businesses across NSW operate in a small business friendly area.
- ✓ Encouraging councils to collaborate and engage with small businesses.
- ✓ More than 200 initiatives in various stages of implementation to support small businesses in progress.



Case Study:

Tamworth is Tapping into Small Business

Signing up to the Small Business Friendly Councils Program is yet another way Tamworth Regional Council is fulfilling the community's vision "A region of opportunity and prosperity, a place to call home".

Tamworth is a thriving and diverse town which is home to more than 5700 businesses from industries including retail, manufacturing, food and beverage and agriculture.

As part of the Small Business Friendly Councils Program, the Council has developed the Tamworth Regional Council App that gives users access to this great region anywhere, anytime. Business owners, the community and visitors can find out what's on, and where to go and indulge in the multitude of things Tamworth has to offer from their mobile device.

The Council has established a Small Business Advisory Board to gain a better understanding of small business needs and to learn how best to work with them. The Advisory Board identifies and implements at least two small business improvement initiatives per year.

The Advisory Board also provides direct feedback on the small business community and suggests new and exciting opportunities that perhaps could not be realised by Council alone, enabling Council to assist small business growth and prosperity in the region.

These activities aim to improve the services that Council currently provides to its small business community and are a natural extension of Council's strong relationship with the Tamworth Business Chamber, which also works to improve the business operating environment.

Craig Dunstan, Manager Destination Tamworth of Tamworth Regional Council said that they decided to partner with the Small Business Friendly Councils Program to boost the small business community.

"Our small businesses are vital to our region, we are focused on strong regional development and are committed to creating programs that make running a small business really rewarding."

"By working directly with small businesses, we are listening to their needs and working together for a better future."



Our Focus for the Future

In 2016, the Office of the NSW Small Business Commissioner (OSBC) will continue to introduce policies and programs that support businesses to start up, scale up and innovate. A particular focus will be assisting businesses to embrace digital opportunities and to use technology to improve their business.

Small business is a diverse sector which is constantly evolving. It reaches across different industries and contributes to both local markets and the broader economy.

Small business people and entrepreneurs share a passion and dedication that is truly inspiring. The OSBC looks forward to working with the business community to further empower them with information, support and assistance.



Hip Digs
Griffith



Serena Dot Ryan
Oran Park

