

Small Business Reference Group Communique

Members of the NSW Small Business Reference Group (SBRG) participated in the latest meeting on 2 July 2024.

The SBRG supports the NSW Small Business Commissioner (the Commissioner) in identifying the key issues, challenges, and experiences faced by small businesses across NSW.

SBRG members noted that business conditions continue to be challenging, with NSW on track to reach a record number of insolvencies for the 2023/24 financial year. The Commission's [Momentum Survey](#) continues to point to weak business conditions and near-record low business sentiment, while recent inflation indicators suggest there is still some way to go to ensure inflation remains under control.

“Given the difficult climate, we encourage small businesses in distress to [contact the Commission](#). Our mediation and advocacy services may be able to assist and I encourage businesses to contact us to discuss how we may be able to help,” said NSW Small Business Commissioner Mr Chris Lamont.

A key focus of SBRG members was the ongoing progress on the Commission's [review of small business experiences with regulatory policymaking](#), including the recent release of a discussion paper and survey.

“It is important for industry associations, small businesses and other stakeholders to have their say as part of this important review. This will assist the Commission in identifying opportunities to improve regulatory outcomes for small businesses,” said Chris Lamont.

The consultation period closes on 12 July 2024.

At the meeting members highlighted the impact of new regulation on business operations and plans to invest and hire new staff. The group is working to identify practical measures to reduce red tape and improve regulation making that is more consumer and business friendly.

“In Australia there is a tendency for governments to propose modest red-tape reductions initiatives in advance of an upcoming election, only to introduce more new regulations after being elected - with the result that businesses are burdened with ever increasing levels of regulatory compliance. In an essential industry like fuel distribution and retail, that means our businesses are faced with increased compliance costs that are ultimately passed on to the market.

There is an opportunity here to be part of the solution, to assist governments in proposing more effective regulatory compliance processes that will ultimately benefit both consumers and business.”

- Mark McKenzie, Australian Convenience & Petroleum Marketers Association



“The level and rate of regulatory change in the residential construction industry in NSW has been enormous in recent years. The rate and scale of change is simply too great for small businesses in the sector to absorb. It places a significant administrative burden on businesses at a time when we need them to get on with building and adding to housing supply.

Most regulatory changes in NSW result in increased construction input costs, often leading to margin erosion on fixed contracts. Regulatory changes are often considered in isolation, without the cumulative impacts being assessed on the total housing supply chain.

A more holistic and coordinated approach needs to be adopted in NSW and the SBRG is an important initiative that provides a platform to highlight and help address the critical challenges for small businesses in our industry”.

- David Bare, Housing Industry Association

“As business owners and operators in Australia we have become so accustomed to regulation that when over regulation or unnecessary “red tape” does occur, we don’t always know how to recognise it and feel powerless to fight it. Calling out poor practice and cases of unnecessary “red tape” through the Commissioner’s review is essential to ensuring NSW businesses can be as competitive as possible both within Australia and internationally.”

- David Mumford, RBK Nutraceuticals

Members of the SBRG:

- Luke Achterstraat - CEO, Council of Small Business Organisations Australia
- David Mumford - Director, RBK Nutraceuticals
- Yasmin Coe - Founder, Sweet Pea & Poppy
- Todd & Jenny Raffin - Owners, Almighty Industries
- Mark McKenzie - CEO, Australian Convenience & Petroleum Marketers Association
- Tim Burt - Director, Future Skills Organisation
- Kylie Yates - CEO, Civil Contractors Federation NSW
- David Bare - NSW Director, Housing Industry Association
- Amanda Gould - Director, Real Estate Institute of NSW