

Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman

Dear Honorary Bruce Billson, MP, Minister for Small Business,

Thank you very much for the opportunity to contribute to the above Discussion Paper. As you have identified, the key issue is to simplify how business is conducted. The concept of what you are trying to do is great, but it still remains complicated. My suggestion would be to work from a SME perspective on key topics, and drive change. "Big" business would also benefit from many of these changes:

How can the Ombudsman be a strong advocate to Government? Are there particular practices that the ombudsman should focus on?

Industrial Relations – Implement an SME category in Fairwork that brings things right back to the basics by simplifying the many awards. Minimum Employment conditions such as minimum rates of pay etc can exist, but really it should be a simple document of conditions. Further, make it illegal for one organisation to impose its' employment conditions on another as part of being a supplier. This happens in for instance the building industry, where subcontractors are forced onto the head contractors EBA or contract conditions and forced to apply it for that job – this is unfair on the SME, and creates other problems for the SME (such as when working on different projects).

Develop a Standard Business Terms and Conditions – again, a simple (even 1 page) document that can be used as a Best practice. Agree on what are standard trading terms (i.e. 30 days payment terms) etc.

Review Government Procurement procedures – Government would get much better value overall if the selection process was simplified and made more small business friendly. SME's don't have the resources to submit binders full of "tick-the-box" forms and procedures, and once the submission is accepted, it's rarely looked at again anyway.

OH&S – change the focus from being a document driven "cover-your-arse" system, to one that is outcomes focussed.

Existing Small Business Commissioner Roles – having these at both a State and Federal level will be difficult and maintains the current confusion. Make it a National role only, and work towards homogenising all the issues.

Thank you for your time and interest. Should you require any clarification or further input, please feel free to come back to me at any time.

Best Regards,

Fred Carlsson

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