



**The Hon Katrina Hodgkinson MP**

Minister for Primary Industries  
Minister for Small Business

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BN11/2173

Senator Nick Sherry  
Minister for Small Business  
PO Box 6022  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA NSW 2600

- 9 AUG 2011

Dear Senator

*Nick*,

I am writing to you in relation to the Commonwealth Government's *Resolution of Small Business Disputes – Options Paper*.

The NSW Government is supportive of measures to provide affordable and efficient dispute resolution services to Australian small businesses. As you know, awareness amongst small business operators of low cost dispute resolution services needs improving. On the basis of current information it would be prudent to promote the range of available services to small business in the first instance.

In NSW, small businesses can seek low cost dispute resolution from a number of bodies depending on the issue. The range of services reflects the disparate nature of disputes and the specialised nature of services required in many instances. In addition, the NSW Government has recently appointed the State's first Small Business Commissioner. The Office of the Small Business Commissioner will cover the range of dispute resolution services available, which are listed in Appendix 1 of the Options Paper.

The Commissioner will manage a broad range of NSW Government delivered alternative dispute resolution services for small businesses. This will include a 'clearing house' for complaints, which will be complemented by an on-line capability. The NSW Government will also continue to provide high quality low cost dispute resolution services in the area of retail tenancy.

I have noted the four options canvassed in the Options Paper. While all have their merits, I urge the Commonwealth to carefully consider any gaps identified, possible duplication between State and Commonwealth services and potential to cause confusion in the market place as a result of government intervention.

The NSW Government is willing to work with the Commonwealth to enhance the level of service to our small business community.

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If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact Ilse van de Meent in my office on (02) 9228 5210 or by email at [ilse.vandemeent@minister.nsw.gov.au](mailto:ilse.vandemeent@minister.nsw.gov.au). The Departmental contact is Alok Ralhan who can be contacted on (02) 9338 6666 or by email at [alok.ralhan@business.nsw.gov.au](mailto:alok.ralhan@business.nsw.gov.au).

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K. Hodgkinson', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

**Katrina Hodgkinson MP**  
**Minister for Small Business**