



13 August 2013

The Productivity Commission
Regulator Engagement with Small Business
PO Box 1428
Canberra City ACT 2601

small.business@pc.gov.au

Comment on the Draft Study into Regulator Engagement with Small Business

COSBOA congratulates the Productivity Commission on this draft study and we look forward to the launch of the final report. The importance and the difference of small business within the economy and from big business has been stressed and repeated enough to, perhaps, influence those who need influencing.

The highlighting of the real needs of small business people in this report, the way forward and the better ways the regulators can deal with small business should add to the productivity of small business and to the health of the people who run and work in those small businesses. As a result the economy will be in a healthier state.

For the final report we would like you to consider whether regulators should also publish the good side of their interaction with the small business community. For example the Fair Work Ombudsman may wish to publish information on how many small business pay over the award as well as those that pay under the award. This would then provide positive as well as negative information on business sectors. At the present time we only see the negative information which gives fuel to those who may wish to vilify our sector.

The regulators may also wish to publish information on why they believe a certain sector or group of small businesses may be struggling to comply with a particular compliance demand. This would make regulators think long and hard about whether small business people are basically inept or whether there are some structural impediments to compliance. This may cause regulators to engage in one of the recommendations from this study which is better communications between regulators.

We also commend the recognition between some regulation which is of high importance, for example food safety, and regulation which is important but does not have the same immediate risk factor.

We see the key recommendations are that regulators:

- be flexible and proportionate in their enforcement, with a consistent focus on outcomes
- minimise unnecessary compliance and reporting costs imposed on small business, including the cumulative burden derived from engagement with multiple regulators
- understand the needs and constraints of small business generally and those specific to their business or industry.

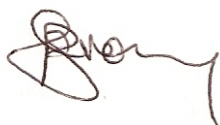
From those recommendations in place we should see a positive change for small business, the community and regulators.

We also hope that those who design regulation will read this report and understand the importance of getting policy right in the first place and ensuring that any policy can actually be communicated and policed without confusion or complexity.

We look forward to the final report and to participating in implementation of change.

For any further information please contact me.

Yours Sincerely



Peter Strong
Executive Director