

Tuesday, 22 June 2021

ONGOING BOOST TO SUPPORT SMALL BUSINESS

The NSW Small Business Commission will receive \$13 million in funding in the next financial year to progress the delivery of key projects and continue to support the recovery of small businesses across the State.

Minister for Finance and Small Business Damien Tudehope said the funding would ensure the Commission could continue to provide critical support to small businesses as they recover from the impacts of COVID-19.

“Demand from small business for the Commission’s support remains two to three times higher than prior to COVID-19,” Mr Tudehope said.

“Since the start of the pandemic the Commission’s customer call centre has managed more than 49,000 engagements with small businesses and other customers.

“This includes more than 3,200 applications to use its mediation service, mostly from small businesses wanting to renegotiate their lease arrangements because of the impact of COVID-19. More than 90 per cent of these have been resolved without the time and expense of going to court.”

The strengthened funding by the NSW Government provides:

- Additional mediation staff to support the low-cost resolution of retail and commercial tenancy disputes as well as business-to-business disputes;
- Additional customer service positions to manage calls and web-based enquiries from small businesses and provide tailored information and support;
- Enhanced advocacy, surveying and stakeholder engagement activities to identify the key issues facing small businesses during the COVID recovery and develop solutions and support.

NSW Small Business Commissioner Chris Lamont said the issues small businesses were bringing to the Commission’s attention had become more complex as businesses adapted to the post-COVID economy.

“This continued funding will help us meet the strong demand for support and assistance,” Mr Lamont said.

“Mediation services in particular have been highly valued by small business and importantly are delivering real results that ensure these businesses can overcome their short-term difficulties and actually stay in business.”

As part of the 2020-21 NSW Budget, the Government funded the Commission to deliver a four-year, \$5 million tender support program aimed at helping small businesses improve their tendering skills and win more work from the NSW Government and the private sector.

As part of the tender support program, the Commission will partner with TAFE to deliver training modules for small business on how to tender for Government work and meet the qualification requirements, including:

- Getting Business Ready;
- Finding Opportunities;
- Selling to Government; and
- Managing contracts for success.

Minister for Skills and Tertiary Education Geoff Lee said it was great to see the NSW Small Business Commission working with TAFE NSW, the State's comprehensive public training provider.

"These Micro Skills will help small business owners upskill and reskill their teams, and ultimately be empowered to grow their businesses," Mr Lee said.

"This is another example of TAFE NSW using its purpose-built online education platforms to help the Government rapidly meet the skills needs of industry."

A comprehensive and free small business tendering support guide will complement the training modules.

The new program also aligns with the NSW Government's refreshed Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) and Regional Procurement Policy, which includes an exemption that allows Government agencies to directly procure goods and services from an SME or regional business up to \$150,000.

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