



Australian Government



Australian
**Small Business and
Family Enterprise**
Ombudsman

16 August 2018

Mr Matthew Sedgwick
Consumer and Corporations Policy Division
The Treasury
Langton Crescent
PARKES ACT 2600

By email: regmond@treasury.gov.au

Dear Mr Sedgwick

MODERNISING BUSINESS REGISTERS

We support the modernisation of business registers to provide a single portal for business owners to meet regulatory requirements for registering and updating information on their business structure, and governance. This is a key step to address the complexity of regulatory requirements and enabling small businesses to be compliant. The proposed principles for simplification are the following:

Single Portal

A single portal will combine 32 registers into one, encouraging small business owners to update their details as their business matures, resulting in structural changes.

For an integrated system to succeed, state-of-the-art technology is required. Not only to establish the portal and single register, but to maintain functionality and remain accessible by applications of the day used by small businesses.

Enter information once only

To be effective, the portal should require business owners to enter their information once and for items of information to be accessible by relevant agencies.

The establishment of a single portal for business will also enable additional regulations, such as the proposed Director Identification Number (DIN), to be seamlessly included by government and managed by small business owners.

Cost Recovery

Cost recovery through charges to register need to be appropriated in accordance with the size of the business. This would remain applicable when accessing and making changes to the data, with costs reflecting the complexity of the specific activity. These costs should be scalable and echo the effort required by the owner of the register to affect the change. This will enable verification across data, provide a data bank to aid public policy and deliver accurate and reliable data on the health of our economic engine, small businesses.

Capture additional data

The design phase of the register should consider the inclusion of other data to enable analysis of the business landscape. For example, revenue (>\$2 million, \$5-\$10 million, >\$10 million), number of employees (>20/>100/>200), is your business an enterprise and/or a family enterprise. We note that general definitions for an enterprise and/or family enterprise would require regulator and industry association's agreement. Flexibility would need to be built into the system, allowing for opportunities to update definitions, as the business environment evolves and changes.

We note there are some successful business registers around the world. In particular, New Zealand (NZ) has run a successful fully electronic companies register since 2004. Key features of the NZ register include company incorporation and maintenance (including document upload and generation), company and director searching and management and operational reporting.¹

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. If you would like to discuss this matter further, please contact Jill Lawrence on 02 6263 1558 or at jill.lawrence@asbfeo.gov.au.

Yours sincerely



Kate Carnell AO

Australian Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman

¹ <https://www.fostermoores.com/new-zealand-companies-register/>