



The Ombudsman, Bruce Billson (L), and ASBFEO team member Steve (R), with ASIC staff at the South East Field Days in Lucindale, South Australia.

A reason every season to support small business

As Easter approaches, I wish those small and family businesses who will be open over this holiday period a trouble-free and prosperous trading period and for those who are getting a break that they can rest and recharge with family and friends.

For many, a great tradition at Easter is to enjoy seafood, so it is timely we have just released our submission to the Australian Government's consultation about proposed new country of origin labelling rules.

A significant development is we have launched an Inquiry to examine the impact of reforms to Commonwealth procurement rules on small business. We're exploring what works, which departments and agencies are exemplars and what can be done

better to boost small business opportunities to win procurement contracts.

I urge anyone with ideas and suggestions to lodge a submission at inquiries@asbfeo.gov.au and visit our [Procurement webpage](#) for more information including the Terms of Reference.

I had the pleasure to visit Lucindale, just outside of Mount Gambier, to attend the South East Field Days to meet with regional small and family businesses in the agricultural sector to hear about important issues and talk about our work, especially in relation to industry codes and low-cost dispute resolution services.

Industry codes tend to pop up with is an inherent power imbalance and we are the dispute resolution agency for industry codes covering Dairy, Horticulture, Oil and Food and Grocery. See more information about [industry codes](#).



Procurement Inquiry

We have launched an Inquiry to examine the impact of reforms to Commonwealth procurement rules on small business. The Inquiry was referred to the ASBFEO by the Minister for Finance, Katy Gallagher.

For many small and family businesses, identifying and securing Commonwealth procurement contracts can be complex, costly, confusing and time-consuming.

It is timely to examine how the system is working for small and family businesses, the role procurement rules are playing to support small business participation and what lessons and improvements can be made.

We want to identify those departments and agencies who are exemplars in providing procurement opportunities to small businesses and celebrate this success and help others to emulate it.

Similarly, we seek to shine a light on those whose dealings with small business are poor.

We invite written submissions from small businesses and other interested parties which should be sent to inquiries@asbfeo.gov.au by 1 July 2023.

A final report with recommendations will be given to the Australian Government in December.

[Visit the Inquiry webpage](#)



Seafood labelling regulation

Many Australians will enjoy Australian seafood this Easter, but it should not come at the expense of proposed new country of origin labelling rules imposing a compliance nightmare for small and family businesses.

The federal Department of Industry, Science and Resources is consulting on the proposed model for mandatory country-of-origin labelling for hospitality businesses and we are calling for the entire scheme to be reconsidered given the high

compliance costs – or failing that, to require only voluntary reporting where the seafood is a minor ingredient or a small proportion of the value of the offering.

Country-of-origin labelling for seafood in hospitality should be simple, useful and proportionate to the seller's offering. While it is rightly intended to improve transparency for consumers and support Australian seafood producers, the proposal is onerous, costly and an unhelpful addition to the growing regulatory burden mounting on small and family businesses.

[Read our submission](#)

[Read our press release](#)



Digital platforms have fundamentally changed the way in which small businesses connect and sell to their customers, but they do not make it easy for our small and family businesses to fix problems.

There have been too many examples of small business owners being locked out of their account, typically after being hacked, yet it can be a nightmare trying to contact a real person to resolve their problem.

We are calling on digital platform

Data portal update



Find out where Australia's small businesses are located and what the numbers are doing and more in the latest updates to the [ASBFEO data portal](#).

The updates to the location of Australia's small businesses - regional and metro areas and location of Australia's small businesses by state and territory - reveal the number of small businesses increased nationally by 7% in 2021-22, with the largest increases in Victoria (11%) and ACT (8%).

providers to dramatically improve their dispute resolution processes for small business.

[Read the op-ed](#)

[Read our submission to the Senate inquiry](#)

The portal is updated constantly, so don't forget to check in regularly. Also have a look through the key statistics page for some of the more interesting findings that have been turned into infographics.

[Have feedback on the data portal?](#)



The Australian Cyber Security Centre has launched a campaign urging all Australians to regularly back up their important files. Our devices contain valuable personal and business information.

One minor accident, like spilling a drink on your device or clicking on a malicious link, could mean losing everything.

ACSC has a checklist of simple steps to take and other useful information which can be found below.



It is important for businesses to keep detailed and accurate records for all transactions related to tax and superannuation.

Good record keeping is a solid foundation for managing your business and cash flow, particularly at tax time.

The Tax Office has provided essential tips to improve record keeping.

[Visit the ATO for more info](#)

[Learn more](#)



The Australian Financial Complaints Authority is seeking public comments on proposed changes to the rules that govern its work helping consumers and financial firms to resolve complaints.

The consultation period is open until 22 May and more information, including a consultation paper, a summary of proposed changes and FAQs are available below.

[Visit AFCA's website](#)



Do you own an existing micro-business and need business support? The Self-Employment Assistance program helps existing micro-business owners to grow, diversify, or restart their business.

Self-Employment Assistance is a free and flexible service provided by the Australian government tailored to the needs of individuals and their micro-businesses. Services include business advice sessions, small business training, business plan development or business health checks. More comprehensive services are also available including 12-months of business coaching that can be tailored to the needs of your business.

[More information](#)

**Subscribe to our media release list and
be among the first to receive news and
alerts from the ASBFE0.**

Email media@asbfeo.gov.au



Australian Government



Australian
**Small Business and
Family Enterprise**
Ombudsman

*Copyright © 2023 Australian Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman
All rights reserved.*

Our mailing address is:

media@asbfeo.gov.au