



Self-employed in perspective

The self-employed and small business people always say that no one understands them.

Now they have the evidence to prove it.

In the run-up to the National Small Business Summit in Brisbane tomorrow, the Independent Contractors Association has released research showing how misguided ideas about the self-employed in particular have been.

Pulling together information from the Australian Bureau of Statistics, the Tax Office and Roy Morgan Research, the result paints a different picture about those who work for themselves.

ICA executive director **Ken Phillips** says the image of the self-employed as being either young contractors or tradesmen was wide of the mark.

Instead, the majority of Australia's estimated 2.1 million contractors or other microbusinesses tend to be 35 or over.

They are in the high-income category, with more than 41 per cent earning six-figure incomes.

There has been a perception that the self-employed may understand their own industry but are often disorganised and have poor management skills.

Yet almost 80 per cent say they have an accountant working for their

business and many also have a bookkeeper. Only a handful of very small businesses don't have business software programs, the Tax Office says.

But while they are more mature, wealthier and more sophisticated than may have been recognised, they do not feel they get well treated well by the bureaucracy.

"A defining factor of micro-business is the fact that it is run by individuals who expect to be treated as such but may not necessarily understand ATO concerns or communications."

Which is one thing the self-employed and the rest of us could probably agree upon.