



# **MEDIA RELEASE**

**The Hon. Bruce Billson MP**

Federal Member for Dunkley  
Shadow Minister for Small Business, Deregulation,  
Competition Policy and Sustainable Cities

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## **Emerson Heralds Help ‘Call Count’ While Ignoring Small Business Calls for Action**

The Rudd Government continues to show how out of touch it is with the genuine needs and concerns of the small business community by promoting the number of calls for help from troubled operators rather than address the concerns causing distress.

Small Business Minister, Craig Emerson ‘welcomes’ the 10,000<sup>th</sup> call to the small business support line set up just six months ago. However, the small business community has little to celebrate as issue after issue, concern after concern, challenge after challenge is either caused or ignored by the Rudd Government.

Here are 10 ‘calls’ from small business where less talk and more action from the Minister and the Rudd Government would be genuinely welcomed.

Call # 1 – Calls from the small business community for greater information and education to support employers to cope with the ‘one size fits all’ so-called award modernisation process that resulted in \$10 million being provided to the union movement to train shop stewards when help for shop keepers and small business operators is needed.

Call # 2 - Calls for practical advice about the mysteries and confusion of Labor’s new workplace regime go off to FairWork Australia where only superficial and unreliable information is provided with the risk of prosecution hanging over businesses that may reveal any unintentional non-compliance.

Call # 3 – Calls from the Coalition and endorsed by numerous small business organisations for a moratorium on small business prosecution have been but ignored by the Rudd Government even as awards and interpretations continue to change and dozens of variation applications are still unresolved.

Call # 4 – Calls to take action on the crisis facing credit-worthy enterprises trying to access finance on affordable terms (which continues to be the most significant small business concern) have been ignored by Craig Emerson and he has yet to confirm whether the Rudd Government and Commonwealth agencies will be positive and constructive participants in the Senate inquiry initiated by the Coalition to examine challenges and solutions.

Call # 5 – Calls for the Rudd Government to explain how plans to force new enterprises to pay an upfront ‘tax bond’ to cover potential future tax liabilities will not add to cash-flow and working capital challenges facing start up small businesses, have not been responded to amid concerns that this plan ‘*will inhibit enterprise, force honest small businesses underground and create greater problems in taxation management*’ (Peter Strong, CEO, National Independent Retailers Association, 1 April, 2010).

Call # 6 – Calls for the Rudd Government to honour its pre-election promise not to change current tax laws applying to independent contractors and the self-employed, have been ignored as the closeted Henry Review considers devious Government-sponsored recommendations to turn the

current law on its head and create extraordinary new red-tape burdens, reporting obligations and complex regulatory requirements.

Call # 7 – Calls for the Minister for Small Business to highlight and discourage anti-competitive ‘promotions’ damaging smaller DVD retailers with well-below-cost new release titles being sold subject to a minimum ‘shop spend’, have been rejected for fear of upsetting the ACCC, leaving open the risk of this tactic being used for a wider range of categories not dominated by the big supermarkets.

Call # 8 – Calls for the Minister to urge equipment rental finance companies to delay ‘debt’ recovery action until the legality and validity of ‘telephone scam’ contracts has been determined.

Call # 9 – Fears that the Government’s proposed changes to the research and development tax concession that include restrictive definitions, new exclusions and the greater administrative and compliance burdens that will disadvantage innovative small business have not been addressed or allayed by the Minister and significant uncertainty remains.

Call # 10 – Calls for Craig Emerson to step up and be the Minister for Small Business and not simply oversee a few Department programs have fallen flat as small business is not a priority for the Rudd Government as the Minister is not in Cabinet and this is why small business is consistently overlooked in Government decision-making or treated as an ‘after-thought’.

Rather than celebrate and publicise 10,000 calls for help as the Minister seeks to do, the small business community would ‘welcome’ the Small Business Minister seriously addressing these 10 ‘calls’ for action about issues and challenges the small business community is facing in a difficult and demanding trading environment.