



MEDIA RELEASE

The Hon. Bruce Billson MP

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Shadow Minister for Small Business, Deregulation,
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What will it take for Mr Rudd to move on small business finance concerns?

Calls for the Rudd Government to get behind the Coalition's proposed Senate Inquiry on access to small business finance have been further boosted by compelling research released today confirming that the cost and availability of finance is the top concern for Australian small and medium businesses.

The poll conducted for the Council of Small Business of Australia (COSBOA) and Telstra Business reflects the widespread small business concerns that gave rise to the Coalition's proposal for a Senate Inquiry announced by Opposition Leader, Tony Abbott and Coalition Small Business Spokesman, Bruce Billson, in December.

Six weeks have passed since the Coalition committed to pursuing a Senate Inquiry. Mr Rudd and his Minister for Small Business must think if they ignore the difficulties faced by the small business community, the problems will go away.

The Rudd Labor Government continues its indifference to small business.

The Rudd Government's silence on the proposed Senate Inquiry into small business finance must end and a clear position needs to be taken in the face of overwhelming support for the Coalition's initiative, mounting evidence of the challenges facing small business operators and the loud, clear and consistent message from the small business community about the need for action.

I call on the Rudd Government to back the Coalition's proposal for a Senate inquiry on access to small business finance.

Without exception, the small business community has welcomed and endorsed the Coalition's initiative to pursue the establishment of a Senate inquiry to highlight the financing challenges faced by small businesses and to examine possible ways of addressing this obstacle to economic recovery and jobs growth.

Despite an improving economy, many credit-worthy and successful small businesses across Australia continue to face difficulties in getting access to adequate and affordable finance. They identify cash-flow and the cost and availability of funds as key concerns.

The Coalition has listened carefully to the widespread concern in the small business community and recognises that available and affordable finance is the oxygen needed to support small business as the engine-room of the Australian economy.

We are encouraged by the positive response to the initiative and the clear recognition by the Coalition that if small business is to play its part in driving economic recovery and jobs growth, timely access to finance on reasonable terms is an important pre-condition.