

Senate Standing Committees on Education and Employment

Inquiry into the Fair Work Amendment (Protecting Penalty and Overtime Rates) Bill 2025

QUESTION ON NOTICE

Date of hearing: 13 August 2025

Outcome: | WR | Workplace Relations Legal

Department of Employment and Workplace Relations Question No. IQ25-000012

Senator Maria Kovacic on 13 August 2025, Proof Hansard page 47

13 August 2025 | Support for small business

Question

Senator KOVACIC: In terms of the resources that you spoke about at the Fair Work Commission, this might be out of your remit, but I'm curious to understand how many small businesses access those services.

Ms Godden: I'm sorry, Senator; I don't have that information off the top of my head.

Senator KOVACIC: Is that something the department is able to provide on notice?

Ms Godden: We can certainly see if we can, Senator.

Answer

The Department of Employment and Workplace Relations understands Senator Kovacic's questions were about support for small business. The role of the Fair Work Ombudsman is to promote harmonious, productive, cooperative and compliant workplace relations in Australia. This includes providing education, assistance, advice and guidance to employees and employers, including small businesses.

The Fair Work Ombudsman's Employer Advisory Services (EAS) was established in July 2021 to assist small businesses to understand, and comply with, their obligations under the *Fair Work Act 2009* by providing free, written technical advice in response to enquiries (*Office of the Fair Work Ombudsman Annual Report 2023–24*, page 27). Further information on the EAS can be found at smallbusiness.fairwork.gov.au/employer-advisory-service.

In the 2024-25 Budget, the government provided the Fair Work Ombudsman \$20.5 million over 4 years from 2024–25 (and \$5.1 million per year ongoing) to boost the Employer Advisory Service to provide additional supports for small business (*Employment and Workplace Relations 2024–25 Portfolio Budget Statements*, page 17).

The most recent data published by the Fair Work Ombudsman on the EAS indicates that in 2023–24, the EAS provided 3,142 pieces of tailored, written advice on matters relating to pay and worker entitlements to help small businesses comply with the law. In total, since the EAS was established to 2023–24, it has provided 7,338 pieces of tailored written advice to small businesses, and experienced a year on year increase in requests for such advice (*Office of the Fair Work Ombudsman Annual Report 2023–24*, page 27).

In addition to the EAS, the Fair Work Ombudsman has a dedicated web page with small business resources (smallbusiness.fairwork.gov.au/). It also operates a Small Business Helpline which answered 51,346 calls in the 2023–24 financial year (*Office of the Fair Work Ombudsman Annual Report 2023–24*, page 26).

If required, the Fair Work Ombudsman can assist with current data on the numbers of small businesses accessing these resources.

The government also supports employer peaks to provide advice and support to businesses, including small businesses, through the Productivity, Education and Training (PET) Fund grant program. Employer peaks, including the Council of Small Business Organisations Australia (COSBOA) and the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI), are each being funded \$3.198 million per year between 2024-25 and 2027-28 to engage, educate and support their members to understand and implement government workplace relations reforms. (*Employment and Workplace Relations 2024–25 Portfolio Budget Statements*, page 17).