

Victorian Small Business Commissioner

The Victorian Small Business Commissioner (VSBC) is an independent office established by the Victorian Government to assist small business.

A wide range of functions and powers are dedicated to promoting a competitive and fair operating environment for small business.

Informing and educating

Practical assistance is provided on a range of small business issues and information is provided to ensure that all parties are aware of their rights and responsibilities. It also promotes informed decision-making by small business to assist in minimising disputes with other businesses. The VSBC website contains online forms, legislation, information and regulations relevant to small business, as well as upcoming events.

Investigate complaints

Ranging powers are afforded to the VSBC to investigate unfair market practices affecting small business.

Resolving disputes

The VSBC assists small business by offering preliminary assistance, investigation and mediation.

Government practices

Government departments and agencies are encouraged to improve the business environment on which they impact and to be conscious of the needs of small business.

How does the VSBC resolve disputes?

Assistance is provided to reduce the burden of disputes on all parties by providing an informal, low cost and time effective service. Mediations are generally conducted over a 3-4 hour period. An independent mediator is appointed by the VSBC to assist in resolving the dispute.

Are businesses charged a fee for mediations?

A low cost mediation service is offered. Current costs are detailed on the VSBC website.

Further information:

Telephone: (03) 9651 9967

Telephone (investigations line): (03) 9651 9316

Website: www.sbc.vic.gov.au

Email: [sbcsbc.vic.gov.au](mailto:sbc@sb.vic.gov.au)

Gippsland Business Awards



Russell congratulates Lewis and Rebecca Prince from Neilson's Restaurant on winning the 'Best Restaurant Award' at the recent Latrobe City Business Tourism Association's 'People's Choice' awards. Russell is also joined by LCTBA Chair Ian Southall.

Finalists for the 2011 Gippsland Business Awards are to be announced on Tuesday 12 July 2011.

The Gippsland Business Awards is a non-profit event, with a Committee of Management made up of a cross representation of key stakeholders.

I congratulate all those businesses who have been nominated for these awards and for being recognised within the community for providing exceptional service, products and more. I wish all finalists the best of luck, and look forward to seeing who takes out the top prize.

For further information, please visit: <http://www.gba.org.au>

August is Small Business Month

Victoria's Small Business Festival is taking place from 1-31 August 2011.

The theme of the festival is 'Add One More Skill' to boost business productivity and there is a focus on events supporting the Victorian retail sector.

Events include:

Retail Selling Strategies From The Top - Making Retailers Successful Morwell Breakfast

Wednesday 10 August 2011,
7.00am -9.00am
Waratah Restuarant, GippsTAFE,
Cnr Princes Drive and Monash Way,
Morwell

Regional Shopping and Destination Fair

Friday 12 August 10 am - 3 pm, The Atrium, Federation Square, Melbourne

The fair aims to encourage Melbourne's consumers to visit regional shops and attractions. This is a great marketing opportunity for regional retailers wanting to promote their business direct to the Melbourne Market. Stallholder applications close 1 July.

These are just two of the many events and festivities to be hosted across the state during the month of August. For further information on the various activities being conducted during Small Business Month, visit: www.business.vic.gov.au/festival

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Russell with Member for Gippsland Darren Chester and Director Shae Haefel at newly opened Wolf Business Centre in Traralgon.

> YOUR BUSINESS



Keeping you up to date with business news, legislative changes & local community issues.



FROM THE OFFICE OF RUSSELL NORTHE, MEMBER FOR MORWELL
PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY FOR SMALL BUSINESS

A message from Member for Morwell and Parliamentary Secretary for Small Business Russell Northe.

Welcome to the latest edition of my business newsletter. I trust this finds you and your staff well.

With the beginning of the financial year upon us I would like to update you on developments that may help your business and outline some of the resources available to you from the Victorian Government.

My role as Parliamentary Secretary is to assist the Minister for Innovation, Services and Small Business, Louise Asher in her capacity as Minister.

The Department of Business and Innovation (DBI) is responsible for economic development in Victoria. The department's offices across the State and in key cities overseas act as a liaison between industries and the Victorian Government and is often the first point of contact between the two.

DBI ensures that innovative practices and technologies are championed across industries and businesses; that industries have access to a range of programs, assistance and advice to foster growth and development; and that infrastructure projects in regional areas are supported and developed.

The DBI and Business Victoria websites provide valuable information for businesses and offer a range of e-newsletters to which you can subscribe.

You can visit these websites at: www.dbi.vic.gov.au and www.business.vic.gov.au or alternatively you can contact in person the Victorian Business Centre located at 33 Breed Street, Traralgon, Phone: (03) 5174 9233

I wish you all the best in your business endeavours, and please feel welcome to contact my office should you wish to raise any matters to my attention.

Yours sincerely

Russell Northe

\$10 MILLION TO CREATE JOBS IN THE LATROBE VALLEY

A \$10 million stimulus package for the Latrobe Valley region has been announced by the Victorian Coalition Government to help create jobs and enhance economic growth.



The Latrobe Valley Working Group in action: Gary Blackwood, Damian Drum and Russell Northe

The \$10 million stimulus package is to be administered by Regional Development Victoria (RDV) and has been brought forward to attract strategic investment that will lead to sustainable jobs growth in the Latrobe Valley.

Our region is fortunate in that it has many natural advantages. The stimulus package represents a strong government commitment to helping the local region capitalise on its advantages to secure long term jobs and security.

A Latrobe Valley Working Group has been established and will consist of Parliamentary Secretary for Regional and Rural Development Damian Drum, Parliamentary Secretary for Forestry and Fisheries Gary Blackwood and myself in my capacity as Parliamentary Secretary for Small Business and Member for Morwell.

Consultation will be undertaken with a diverse range of stakeholders including local government, local businesses and the general community. The Working Group will report directly to Deputy Premier Peter Ryan as Minister for Regional and Rural Development.

It is also the objective of the stimulus to provide support and assistance to existing local businesses who wish to grow and expand and at the same time create new jobs in our region.

Our Government is committed to creating new prosperity, more opportunities and better quality of life for those who live and invest in the Latrobe Valley region.

What is Business Victoria?

Business Victoria is a comprehensive online resource designed to help you start, run and grow your business.

On this website you can:

- access information about key business issues and get your questions answered
- access information about specific industry sectors and rural and regional businesses
- identify government licences and regulations that apply to your business
- step through interactive guides customised to your business situation
- register for a free Business Victoria account to save important information and get access to additional tools and services
- find relevant financial support, advice and training
- search across multiple business-related government websites

The Business Victoria website is published by the State Government of Victoria and is managed by the Department of Business and Innovation (DBI).

How do I contact Business Victoria?

Visit www.business.vic.gov.au, or phone 13 22 15.



▲ Russell Northe with Executive Director of the Committee for Gippsland Mary Aldred and Member for Gippsland East Tim Bull

Fire Services Levy will be replaced

The consultation and implementation timetable for the introduction of a fairer, more equitable system to fund fire services in Victoria has been announced.

A property based levy will replace the Fire Services Levy (FSL), which should have been scrapped by the former government years ago.

Our Government has adopted all of the Bushfires Royal Commission final recommendations including that the FSL be replaced with a property-based levy and to introduce concessions for low-income earners.

We will introduce a levy that ensures all Victorian property owners pay a fair contribution to our fire services, while ensuring Victoria's fire services continue to operate equitably and with sufficient resources.

The FSL unfairly slugged home and business owners, particularly in regional Victoria, and encourages people to under insure - or not insure at all.

A position paper will be released shortly and engagement in a comprehensive public consultation process on proposed design and implementation of the structure and transition arrangements will be undertaken.

The position paper will outline the proposed arrangements for key aspects of the FSL including: its design and structure; eligibility for concessions; and the most effective and efficient method to phase out the insurance based model and implement a property based model.

It is anticipated that legislation will be introduced in early 2012 and there will be a transition period that will commence on 1 July 2012 to allow insurers to phase out the FSL prior to full implementation on 1 July 2013.

Committee to focus on Gippsland's future

The newly formed Committee for Gippsland will give local businesses a stronger voice when deciding future development strategies for the region.

I recently had the opportunity to meet with Executive Director, Mary Aldred and discussed some of the its key priorities, including the Committee's desire to upgrade transport infrastructure across Gippsland.

The Committee for Gippsland is chaired by Harry Rijs, from Patties Foods in Bairnsdale, and has membership from large and small businesses right across Gippsland.

It is highly beneficial to have a group of well-connected business people to lobby all levels of government and also promote the benefits of operating in Gippsland to potential investors.

The Committee for Gippsland will offer a point of contact for government departments and politicians seeking feedback about policy changes or issues that affect the broader region of Gippsland.

It is important that all levels of government seek the views of the business sector, as these people are investing their money in the region and creating employment opportunities.

This group will help to bring the region together and promote a positive message about investing in Gippsland and helping to create new jobs. Just as importantly, the group is very conscious about the need to protect the jobs we already have and striving to help existing businesses to prosper and expand their operations.

I'm looking forward to working with the new committee in the interests of our entire region.

2011 -2012 Victorian State Budget

A Business Perspective

The 2011-12 State Budget includes a range of initiatives to support small businesses to start up, export and grow, and targeted assistance for businesses affected by the recent floods. Initiatives in the budget include:

Small business support

The Government is committed to driving a stronger, more competitive economy and business environment in Victoria that will assist industries to generate jobs and investment, improve the capacity of business to compete nationally and globally, and reduce business regulatory burdens.

This support includes funding of \$10 million over four years to enable the Office of the Victorian Small Business Commissioner to continue to fulfil its legislated functions by providing Victorian small businesses with practical support and access to a means of resolving disputes quickly and at low cost.

Funding of \$9.6 million is provided for the continued operation of Business Victoria Online which provides services for over 100 agencies and local councils, and delivers benefits by reducing regulatory burden and facilitating business productivity.

Liquor licence fee reduction

The Coalition Government is committed to reducing liquor licensing fees to help ease the financial burden on small businesses and community clubs across Victoria that pose a low risk to the community in relation to alcohol related violence. This means that liquor licensing fees for more than 10,000 Victorian small businesses and community clubs have, and will be more than halved.

Farm debt mediation scheme

Funding is provided to allow financial institutions to undertake a mediation process with food and fibre producers before initiating debt recovery proceedings. Mediation will be organised through the Office of the Small Business Commissioner and conducted by approved mediators who will seek to develop a mutually agreed resolution between parties without recourse to other legal measures.

The 2011-2012 Victorian State Budget not only delivers on substantial election commitments but commits to strong reforms that will fix our finances and strengthen our economy. One key aspect is our plan to cut the cost of regulation on Victorian Businesses by 25 per cent over three years. For further details on the State Budget see: www.budget.vic.gov.au

VCEC draft report highlights importance of reform to cut red tape

The Coalition Government's commitment to target a 25 per cent reduction in red tape has been noted in a report by the Victorian Competition and Efficiency Commission (VCEC) into the state's regulatory framework.

This report highlighted the importance of the Government's efforts to cut red tape and boost productivity, and indicated some of the challenges ahead, with a high proportion of Victorian businesses perceiving a significant and growing regulatory burden.

We as a Government understand the importance of small businesses being able to grow and expand without having to contend with regulatory setbacks. To address these growing concerns of the Victorian business community, the VCEC will conduct a new inquiry to identify key reform areas that the State Government should target to improve productivity, labour force

participation and Victoria's overall economic competitiveness.

Issues discussed in the Commission's Part 2 Priorities for Regulatory Reform inquiry will be considered as part of the new Inquiry into a State-based reform agenda.

The Commission's inquiry will be informed by a bench marking of Victoria's competitive position relative to other Australian and key overseas competitor jurisdictions. It will also investigate the most advantageous package of policy reforms that the Victorian Government can undertake to improve productivity, participation and the competitiveness of the Victorian economy.

To register your interest and receive updates on the inquiry, please email: reformagenda@vcec.vic.gov.au. For further information please visit <http://www.vcec.vic.gov.au> or phone (03) 9092 5800.

Out & About



Russell with Churchill Hotel Manager Nick Murray.



Russell with Minister for Energy and Resources Michael O'Brien and CEO of Loy Yay Power Ian Nethercote.



Russell with Jane Arwas of the Small Business Commissioner's Office and Annmarie Faulkner of Small Business Victoria and the Mobile Business Centre Van in Traralgon.