



**THE HON MARTIN FERGUSON MP
MINISTER FOR TOURISM**

**THE HON DR CRAIG EMERSON MP
MINISTER FOR SMALL BUSINESS**

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Internet boost for 50,000 small businesses

More than 50,000 small businesses will benefit from \$14 million in Rudd Government funding to help them go online or upgrade their internet presentation.

The funding is being provided from the Rudd Government's \$10 million *Small Business Online* program which has been boosted by another \$4 million to extend it to more tourism small business operators.

Across the nation, 95 per cent of small businesses are connected to the internet, yet only 57 per cent have a website.

The funding will help small businesses – especially tourism operators - take full advantage of the National Broadband Network (NBN) by helping them install and upgrade websites.

Small Business Minister Craig Emerson and Tourism Minister Martin Ferguson announced that grants ranging from \$50,000 to \$700,000 had been offered to 47 small business support groups including industry associations.

The groups will use the grants to help small businesses develop the skills to go online or upgrade their existing internet operations so they can better engage in e-business to reduce costs and improve market opportunities.

Among the groups to be funded are the Darwin Region Business Enterprise Centre (\$320,000); the Margaret River Wine Industry Association (\$140,000); the NSW Business Chamber (\$495,000); and the Gulf Savannah Development group – which supports businesses from Cairns to Broome – (\$200,000).

Dr Emerson said the NBN would provide fresh opportunities for small businesses to lower their costs and extend their market reach.

“The NBN will be a powerful tool for small business and helping 50,000 small businesses go online or improve their online presence will ensure they are ready for these exciting opportunities,” he said.

Mr Ferguson said he was pleased many small tourism operators would receive support.

“In the 21st century, tourists want to know a lot about the quality of the accommodation on offer before committing to travelling to a particular location and giving them a virtual tour online will help improve the attractiveness of tourist destinations,” Mr Ferguson said.

“The business support groups being funded will be specifically targeting the tourism industry, in line with the Government’s announcement of the National Long-Term Tourism Strategy.”

A list of successful applicants and more information on the Small Business Online program can be found at www.ausindustry.gov.au