



HON CRAIG EMERSON MP
MINISTER FOR SMALL BUSINESS, INDEPENDENT CONTRACTORS AND THE SERVICE
ECONOMY
MINISTER FOR COMPETITION POLICY AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS
MINISTER ASSISTING THE MINISTER FOR FINANCE ON DEREGULATION

Transcript
15 February 2010
Sunrise
Interviewees: Dr Craig Emerson, Jaye Radisich

Subjects: Sunrise small business 'Reject the Recession' campaign

KOCH: As you know, we're big believers in small business here at Sunrise and we consider our country's backbone is small business. There are nearly two million small businesses employing almost five million people. Ninety-eight per cent of us use small business regularly. Now last year you'll remember our 'Reject the Recession' campaign, we set up a short term database of businesses willing to give discounts to our 250,000 members of the Sunrise Family. We were absolutely overwhelmed by the number of businesses which took part – 10,000 of them signed up. It became obvious that many were keen to access the media coverage that big business regularly enjoys, and they were saying "Hey, why just do it as part of a 'Reject the Recession' campaign, why not make it permanent?" so we are. You can visit the Sunrise website right now and find businesses right across Australia willing to offer a 10 per cent discount off the final price. You simply need to present your Sunrise Family card and if you're a small business and you want to be part of the Sunrise business family you can register on our website. Your business needs to have 100 employees or less, signing up is free, you can opt in and opt out whenever you like, you must give Sunrise Family members a 10 per cent discount, no asterisks, no fine print, no nothing. Customers can search the online database via the type of business and also the location. So you go to our website, it's all there. You'll also get this sticker to display on your window so Sunrise Family members know how to find you. That one there. Now we consider this a win-win for everyone. Family members get to save money and participating businesses get extra customers and publicity. Now we have a range of other measures for small business planned for right across this year, including business profiles and even acknowledging some great businesses. Plus, our team of experts will be here with weekly tips to grow your business so we want to get behind the backbone of Australia, so you participate as well. That's how it works but why is it important? I'm joined by Dr Craig

Emerson, the Federal Minister for Small Business and Jaye Radisich, from the Council of Small Businesses of Australia who's helping us put all this together. Craig, let me start with you. We're getting a lot of feedback from small business saying "Hey, the economy, the figures are saying the economy is going well, unemployment is down, but it's still pretty tough out there in business land".

EMERSON: Yeah, we're getting the same feedback Kochie. Can I can just say at the outset - congratulations to Sunrise for this initiative because small businesses have been the heroes of the economic downturn. If you look at the jobs figures for Australia they're very strong compared with other countries, 112,000 jobs in the last year. What has small business done in the face of the economic downturn, global recession? - they kept staff on. They could've just said: "We're out of here, see you, might see you when the recovery comes" - they might have cut hours back but they value their staff so much, they valued them before the global recession, they think that when the upturn really sets in for them they'll have some loyalty back from the staff so I think that's terrific. But we get the same feedback, that maybe consumers are feeling more buoyant with the economic recovery but small business themselves are saying: "It's pretty tentative", and we hope it's going to be fine but we still feel there's a way to go yet.

KOCH: And we've got to support them too, because as you say, most small business owners have done the right thing during the recession and us, as consumers, have got to start supporting them as well.

EMERSON: And remember, they're just out there on their own, small business people just have a go on their own. They don't look around for support or if things go wrong. They know they're the people who are on the chopping block. That they might lose their business, they might lose their house, and yet they put on staff and take responsibility for them so I think we should recognise that and this initiative is helping to do that.

KOCH: Jaye what are you getting out of the coal face though? COSBOA represents small business and the small business associations, you're there, you're listening to them. What are they saying to you? Where do they need help?

RADISICH: 'Cautious optimism' I think is the sentiment to summarise how small businesses are feeling. Most people as Dr Emerson have described have come out of the GFC in a, well they still exist and that's the main thing but going forward, people are acting cautiously, not spending too much, not necessarily investing in capital or more staff but as Craig said earlier, focusing on keeping the staff they've got and just staying afloat and seeing when those green shoots start to come.

KOCH: Well we got to all support small business and get into it, hopefully we can help here. Craig certainly small business complains to us a lot by the

treatment of the banks and we saw that in the Commonwealth Bank profit report last week, they made a lot of that record profit out of small business, they've been passing on a lot of savings to consumers and home loan borrowers but really sticking it to small businesses, all the banks are. What can the Government do with that?

EMERSON: We've met with them and I say to them privately and publicly that they shouldn't be the only businesses in Australia whose bottom line is insulated from the global recession. It's almost as if they feel "Well we've got a right to make a profit". Businesses do aspire to make a profit but just about everyone has taken a hit on their bottom line but they've been saying: "Well no we've got to continue to make very very high profits".

KOCH: We've got to make it easier for small business to move don't we? Can you do something about that, to move accounts, bring some competition in?

EMERSON: Yeah, I think that's important and certainly we've met through the Australian Bankers' Association. Jaye organised for small business groups within the COSBOA umbrella to come along and thrash out some of the specific problems because some industries are more adversely affected than others. There was a time when retailing was pretty tough, that seems to be getting a bit better, but small scale commercial development is very very difficult at the moment.

KOCH: Now Jaye, you're going to be helping us with our small business campaign over the next couple of months, we look forward to that and working together.

RADISICH: Can't wait. It's a terrific initiative and I know a lot of small businesses really welcome the opportunity to participate.

KOCH: Bewdy. All right, glad we can lend assistance. Good to see you both.

EMERSON: You too.

RADISICH: Thanks.

END