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Pay up or face consequences

FRANCES STEWART

A RANGE of measures to help small businesses have been announced by federal Small Business Minister Craig Emerson.

Government departments and agencies will now be required to pay small business invoices within 30 days of receipt.

Currently, federal and state governments usually take between 50 and 60 days to pay suppliers.

Dr Emerson said penalties would be imposed on departments for late pay-

ments and small businesses would also be able to charge interest on any overdue payments.

A Bill promised during last year's election campaign that sets time limits and secures the ability to charge interest would be introduced to Parliament soon, Dr Emerson said.

Meanwhile, eight South Australian business enterprise centres will be funded by the Federal Government to provide assistance and support to small businesses.

Centres in Tea Tree Gully, Morphettville, Norwood, Morphett Vale, Mawson Lakes, Elizabeth West, Port Adelaide and Thebarton will receive between \$250,000 to \$300,000 a year.

The Government will also seek the advice of business before it drafts new workplace relations laws.

A small business working group will be created to advise on issues relevant to the sector and will include peak small business organisations.