

Media Release  
March 18 2009



## Newsagents Back Small Business Definition Change

The peak industry body representing Australia's largest group of small business retailers has backed calls for a change to the definition of small business in Labor's workplace legislation.

The Australian Newsagents' Federation (ANF) says businesses exempt from unfair dismissal legislation need to include those with more than just 15 employees.

ANF CEO Anthony Matis says the world has changed since the Rudd Government received a mandate to implement its unfair dismissal laws in 2007, and consideration has to be given to struggling small business owners.

"We support independent senators Steve Fielding and Nick Xenophon in negotiations with Deputy Prime Minister Julia Gillard to get the number to 20 but even that is a bit light on. We would prefer the number to be 25," Mr Matis said.

Debate on the Labor's workplace laws began this week after the Deputy Prime Minister refused to change the small business definition at the request of the independent senators. And the Rudd Government has continually refused to negotiate with the Coalition which wants the definition increased to 25 full-time workers.

Mr Matis said the Government's stubbornness on this issue is yet another impost on the newsagency channel which is already suffering on a number of fronts in extremely difficult times.

"The Government accepts we are in difficult times and has its own way of tackling the consequences. But we believe making it easier for small businesses to employ people without the fear of being potentially crippled in an unfair dismissal case would be good for jobs in this country.

"It seems newsagencies have to deal with a new challenge each week. We recently made representations to the Rudd Government's Emergency Summit on Credit for small business in an attempt to have banks understand how newsagencies work.

"Newsagencies in New South Wales are also facing the potential loss of lottery products with the proposed privatisation of NSW Lotteries. If lotteries end up being available at all service stations supermarkets and even on-line it would be devastating for newsagents," Mr Matis said.

There are approximately 5000 individually-owned family newsagency businesses in Australia which represent the biggest retail and home-delivery network in the country. The newsagency industry turns over \$6.5 billion a year and provides employment for approximately 20,000 people.

Mr Matis said the industry is also about to feel the strain of the changes to the Retail Award with expected hefty loadings for week end staff.

"Week-end trade is vital to these family owned businesses and with changes to staff wages on week-ends the owners themselves will be working in the shop on Saturdays and Sundays. This puts pressure on family life. The pressures are both financial and social."

The newsagency industry has emerged recently from Australia's competition deregulation process with valuable, long-term contracts with Australia's largest publishers which will ensure that newsagents will continue to be the chief retailers and distributors of newspapers and magazines.

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