



Australian
**Small Business and
Family Enterprise**
Ombudsman

MEDIA STATEMENT

21 January 2022

Ombudsman launches small business natural disaster preparedness inquiry

The Australian Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman Bruce Billson has launched an inquiry into small business natural disaster preparedness and resilience.

The inquiry, referred to the Ombudsman by Minister for Employment, Workforce, Skills, Small and Family Business, the Hon Stuart Robert MP, will examine and make recommendations to improve education and engagement programs to best target and assist small businesses in preparing for natural disasters such as fires, floods and drought.

“The impacts of natural disasters on small businesses can be devastating,” Mr Billson says.

“It can mean damaged and destroyed assets, reduced production and revenue streams, and sadly, a business-ending event in some cases that can have devastating personal impacts.

“Recovery can be lengthy - taking a heavy toll on small business owners, their staff and the broader community, but can be greatly assisted by good preparedness.

“The cost of natural disasters and the time it takes for small businesses to get back on their feet could be reduced by being better prepared, taking sensible risk and impact mitigation action and bolstering resilience.

“Governments at all levels have a key role to play in ensuring people have the information they need to make informed decisions about how to manage the risks they face from natural disasters and how to be best placed to recover after an unavoidable event.”

The inquiry follows a recommendation in the 2020 Royal Commission into Natural Disaster Arrangements that “State and territory governments should continue to deliver, evaluate and improve education and engagement programs aimed at promoting disaster resilience for individuals and communities”.

A recent Deloitte Access Economics report found that 97% of government disaster-related expenditure was used for repairs and recovery and just 3% on disaster-preparation and mitigation.

“Our inquiry will make recommendations about the types of supports that could be targeted to small business and how to achieve the best outcomes from those resources,” Mr Billson says.

“We will also make recommendations around the development of targeted resources that could be used by small business and government agencies to better support small business preparedness and resilience.”

Read the full terms of reference at <https://www.asbfeo.gov.au/policy-advocacy/policy-insights/small-business-natural-disaster-preparedness-and-resilience>

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