

Small Business Regulation Review Program

Making it easier to do business in Victoria

Cutting red tape and reducing regulatory burden for small business is a priority for the Victorian Government. To help achieve this, the Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions (DJSIR) delivered the Small Business Regulation Review (SBRR).

Small businesses are the backbone of the economy, with around 710,000¹ across Victoria, making up over 41 per cent² of private sector jobs – making a vital contribution to the economy through innovating, investing, and creating jobs.

The SBRR program delivered three sector based reviews (Retail, Visitor Economy and Construction) between 2016 and 2019.

Looking through the eyes of small business to understand how they experience regulation, reviews focussed on making it easier to do business by addressing priority pain points through practical, tangible reforms that were co-designed with businesses and other key stakeholders to help make it easier to open and grow their business. The majority of the SBRR reforms have now been implemented, with the remaining nearing completion.

SBRR consultation & reform development

Hundreds of small businesses, industry associations, councils, regulators, and relevant government departments and agencies were engaged to inform the SBRR. In addition to targeted consultations, an intensive, human centred co-design process was used with key stakeholders to inform reform development and implementation.

What we heard from small business

“Differing food safety standards [approval permits] across multiple local government areas can cause significant issues for food businesses that operate multiple sites” – café owner

“Information online is hard to navigate and find answers to questions” – events organiser

“It would take hours of the day to actually read each SWMS [Safe Work Method Statement] in detail. It feels like all the effort and liability is pushed to the contractor” – building practitioner

The SBRR codesign process with stakeholders was integral to the successful development of fit for purpose reforms, implementable in the short to medium term.

See over SBRR reform highlights

The SBRR reforms are estimated to deliver between \$317 million and \$474 million per annum in direct benefits to small businesses once fully implemented.

Building on the SBRR reforms

Building on the success of SBRR program, DJSIR is now delivering the Better Approvals for Business Program which is broader in scope and focussed on improving regulatory and related approvals for business and industry to support economic recovery and create jobs.

For details visit: [Better Approvals for Business](#)



¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics, Counts of Australian Businesses, Release December 2022

² Australian Bureau of Statistics, Australian Industry 2020-21, Release May 2022

Small Business Regulation Review Highlights

The Victorian Government, Small Business Regulation Review (SBRR) program reviews focussed on regulatory issues impacting small businesses in the Retail, Visitor Economy and Construction sectors. The reviews, delivered from 2016 to 2019, looked through the eyes of small businesses at the regulations and processes needed to start and grow a business to find practical, implementable reforms to save businesses time and money. A broad range of stakeholders, including businesses, industry associations, regulators, councils, State Government departments and agencies, were engaged throughout each review to inform reform design and delivery. Highlights of key SBRR reforms are summarised below:

Small Business Engagement Charter for Regulators



SBRR CONSTRUCTION REVIEW

- ▶ Launched in October 2020, the **Charter** facilitates best practice and promotes more consistent regulatory engagement processes across partner regulators. The published Charter clearly describes to small businesses what they can expect from regulators as they strive to meet their regulatory obligations.
- ▶ The initial signatories to the Charter are Energy Safe Victoria, Environment Protection Authority, Victorian Building Authority, WorkSafe Victoria and Small Business Victoria.

Online planner for small event and festival organisers



SBRR VISITOR ECONOMY REVIEW

- ▶ Small Business Victoria worked closely with small event organisers and councils to develop the new **Event Planner**, providing event and festival organisers with a clearer understanding of planning requirements and helping them be better prepared to collaborate with local councils and other regulators where needed.
- ▶ The Event Planner tool streamlines the event planning process and provides up-to-date information such as: who to talk to across the various stages of the process; grants that organisers may be eligible for; event permits that may be required, and health and safety requirements.

Making it easier to understand and comply with food safety regulation



SBRR RETAIL REVIEW

- ▶ The Department of Health has worked closely with stakeholders to develop improved guidance material for councils and food businesses to make it clearer and easier to understand and comply with food safety regulations and support more consistent application of requirements.
- ▶ As part of the risk-based approach to regulation, there has also been a reduction in **Food Safety Program** requirements for class 2 businesses, and removal of record keeping requirements for most Class 3 businesses without compromising food safety outcomes. The estimated savings from these changes are **\$112.4 million and \$9 million per year** respectively in reduced compliance costs. The Department of Health is also in the process of delivering an online portal for food premises.

Better Approvals Project



SBRR RETAIL REVIEW

- ▶ Small Business Victoria delivered the Better Approvals Project (BAP) with councils, focussing on four reforms including: a business concierge service, a standard single application form, streamlined information available online, and a model for concurrent processing.
- ▶ An independent evaluation of the BAP found that the program resulted in substantial benefits in terms of time and cost reductions for business approvals and improved efficiencies for councils. This includes a 72% average reduction in the time taken to process applications (from an average of 142 days to 40 days) that require multiple permits. Around 10,000 newly established small retail and hospitality businesses are estimated to benefit from a reduction in regulatory costs ranging from **\$137 million to \$238 million per year**. This translates to direct benefits per year of \$13,500 to \$23,500 for newly established retail and hospitality businesses.

Improving Safe Work Method Statement (SWMS) guidance



SBRR CONSTRUCTION REVIEW

- ▶ The new **WorkSafe SWMS guidance**, developed in consultation with small construction businesses, aims to clarify why a SWMS is an important preventative tool to ensure safety in undertaking high-risk construction work by lowering the risk of injury through safer workplaces.
- ▶ The SWMS reform provides significantly updated and easy to read SWMS guidance and an online interactive PDF form that can be completed on any device, including smartphones – supported by three short, easy to follow **videos** to help users prepare a SWMS.
- ▶ An independent evaluation of the SWMS Guidance reform estimates a reduction in compliance costs associated with SWMS obligations that affected small businesses and sole traders could save between **\$41.1 million and \$80.4 million per year** in total benefits from the new SWMS guidance. This translates to \$8,700 of savings per year for a small business or \$6,400 savings per year for sole traders.

More information about the SBRR program reforms can be found at:

DJSIR, SBRR program