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**MEDIA RELEASE**

**Small business needs a break**

COUNTRYMINDED candidate for New England Pete Mailler wants changes to the Competition and Consumers Act to make it more difficult for big business to exploit small business. He said giving small business the same rights as consumers under the Act was a relatively simple change that would be a far more effective reform.

Pete said a key area of legislation that should help small business is competition policy. But Small business and consumers alike are hopelessly exposed to predatory and anti-competitive business practices.

“The Competition and Consumers Act assumes all consumers are commercially incompetent and is designed to aggressively protect them, but it leaves small business high and dry. The problem is that it doesn’t differentiate between large or small business, which amplifies the imbalance in resources available to argue anti-competitive behaviour for the small business sector,” he said.

“The increasing demands on small business administration and compliance do nothing to improve productivity or profitability and simply add cost to the business and de-motivates the sector,” he said.

Pete said he sees the health of the small business sector as the major contributor to the health of the broader economy. Regional Australia relies even more on a vibrant small business sector, and more than 90 per cent of farming businesses are small businesses.

“Successive Australian governments have professed to be concerned about the small business sector, but still the regulatory demands on the sector see it pushed nearly to the brink. The decline in small business is reflected in the significant reduction in business numbers and labour utilisation, in spite of population growth,” Pete said.

“Council of Small Business Organisations of Australia figures show that small business accounts for approximately 2 million businesses and employs over 7 million people. That’s about two thirds of the Australian workforce.

“Those are big figures, so you would think it would be to the government’s advantage to clearly identify the sector, but no, the definition of a small business still varies between the Australian Tax Office, Fair Work Australia, the Australian Bureau of Statistics and the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

“Interestingly, not one of the many Australian definitions of the small business sector correlates with any of our major international competitors. This fact alone makes it exceedingly unlikely that any Australian government has ever made any serious commitment to the small business sector.”

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