

1.7 VICTORIAN SMALL BUSINESS FRIENDLY CHARTER

(SMcN)

Responsible Director: Peter Panagakos

RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

1. *Accepts the terms of the Victorian Small Business Friendly Charter, including endorsing the procedural changes outlined in this report*
2. *Signs the Small Business Friendly Charter, and*
3. *Promotes Monash City Council as a Small Business Friendly Council.*

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to consider signing up to the *Small Business Friendly Charter (Charter)* prepared by the Office of the Victorian Small Business Commissioner. The Charter has developed to create a fair and competitive environment for Small Business throughout Victoria.

This report recommends that Council sign the Charter.

BACKGROUND

Councils across Victoria are being asked to adopt the Charter, and where necessary, implement changes to their processes as a way to better support small business.

The terms of this Charter were developed in partnership with representatives from twelve Victorian Councils, Small Business Victoria, Local Government Victoria and the Municipal Association of Victoria.

Commitment to this Charter is a pre-requisite for participation in the Victorian Small Business Commissioner's Small Business Friendly Councils Program.

This Charter sets out a number of benchmarks that the signatory councils agree to foster and support small businesses in their Local Government Area, and within their own supply chain.

This Charter has been developed to assist the Council to:

- operate in a way that enhances public confidence in the Council's commitment to engage proactively and effectively with small businesses
- recognise the standards that are expected when engaging with small businesses
- identify best practice approaches to encouraging a vibrant and flourishing small business sector, and
- enable Council to fulfil their commitment to the Small Business Friendly Councils Program.

A copy of the Charter is provided at Attachment 1.

DISCUSSION

The local small business sector is a vital contributor to the community and economy.

The Small Business Friendly Charter outlines things that Councils can do to ensure that their strategic and day-to-day decision making and internal processes support the small business sector.

The main obligations on Council under the proposed Charter are:

- Provide faster permit processing
- Provide advanced notice to affected business when infrastructure and maintenance work may cause disruption
- Provide advice on how to manage for disruption from projects
- Distribute guides and information from the Victorian Small Business Commissioner's Office (VSBCO), and
- Ensure 30 day invoice payments

The majority of the obligations on Council under the Charter are currently embedded in Councils operations. In particular it is noted that Council:

- Recently completed and implemented the Better Approvals project to provide for a more efficient processing of business permits
- Provides advanced notice of infrastructure works
- Provides extensive updates to the business community, including guides and information from the VSBCO, and
- Operates on a 30 day cycle for payment of invoices

To fully implement the terms of the Charter Council will need to:

- Standardise the current process for advanced notice of infrastructure work across the organisation, based on the VSBCO's Small Business Engagement and Managing Disruption Guidelines when planning new works
- Add quicker payments for local small business. This feature is currently available through the current flexible payment terms process.

Upon signing of the Charter, Councils have twelve months to fully implement the changes required to fully comply with the terms.

FINANCIAL ISSUES

There are no direct additional financial implications from signing the charter.

CONCLUSION

Now more than ever the role that small business plays in our community is critical. Signing the Charter serves to assist in ensuring that our operations focus on efficient, considered and response service delivery to small business.

The Charter is a public and formal way to demonstrate Councils ongoing support for small business in Monash.

Upon signing of the Small business Friendly Charter officers will promote the Charter and the Small Business Friendly accreditation through communication channels, including media releases, website and social media by using the accredited logo.