

Sweeney Research Pty Ltd
232 Dorcas Street
South Melbourne
Victoria 3205
Telephone +61 3 9699 8466
Facsimile +61 3 9690 7543
info@sweeneyresearch.com.au
www.sweeneyresearch.com.au

Level 1,
30-32 Market Street
Sydney
New South Wales 2000
Telephone +61 2 9262 3266
Facsimile +61 2 9262 5774

Sweeney Research

Fair Employment Coalition

**Small Business Attitudes to
Industrial Relations in Victoria**
An Executive Summary

Study No. 12161

February 2001

Small Business Attitudes to
Industrial Relations in Victoria
An Executive Summary

An Executive Summary

This document reports the findings of 400 telephone interviews with small business owners/operators on the topic of industrial relations.

The sample profile was...

	N	%
Total	400	100
Location:		
Metro	276	69
Non-metro	124	31
No. of Employees:		
Under 10	304	76
Between 10 - 19	57	14
Between 20 - 29	20	5
Between 30 - 39	10	3
Between 40 - 49	6	2
Between 50 - 59	3	1
Gender:		
Male	265	66
Female	135	34
Industrial Category:		
Manufacturing	68	17
Wholesale	16	4
Retail	103	26
Hospitality	30	7
Services	165	41
Other	18	5

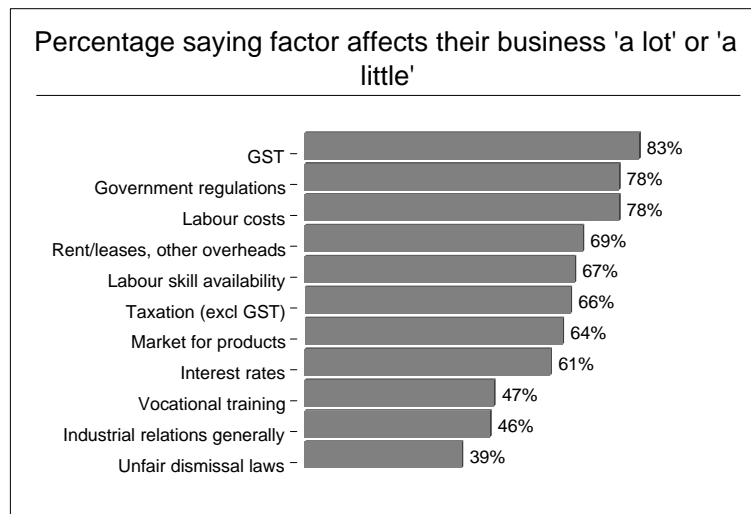
Interviews were conducted between Tuesday 13th and Friday 16th February.

Small Business Attitudes to
Industrial Relations in Victoria
An Executive Summary

The findings can be summarised as follows...

FACTORS IMPACTING ON BUSINESS:

Respondents were asked to indicate the degree to which eleven factors affected their businesses. The results are...



GST, therefore, is the most significant factor — and one we suspect is now of greater concern to employers than six months ago. A mere one in six (17%) say the GST has minimal impact.

It is interesting to note that two “labour force” issues (industrial relations generally and unfair dismissal laws) have relatively low impact on business — in fact, the majority of those interviewed say these two factors have not much or no impact at all on their operations.

ATTITUDES TO IR:

The findings indicate that the majority of employers support a system which could be described as one of fairness to employees. They also support the role of an independent body to ensure that this fairness applies in the market place.

Small Business Attitudes to
Industrial Relations in Victoria
An Executive Summary

Responses to the nine statements can be summarised as follows...

	Total Agree %	Total Disagree %
Laws regulating minimum employment conditions should cover low paid workers	91	3
There should be an independent umpire to assist in resolving industrial disputes	93	2
The State Government has a role to play in strengthening protection for low paid workers	80	14
All businesses should have to meet the same basic minimum standards of wages and conditions for their employees	74	22
I would support an industrial relations system that provides more minimum conditions for non-Federal award workers than the current system	66	18
Businesses should be able to set their own levels of wages and conditions without any legal minimum standards for employees	31	65
Independent contractors such as owner-drivers and couriers should have an independent umpire to turn to in disputes with larger companies	79	9
An independent umpire should have the power for both conciliation and arbitration in disputes	82	9
Federal industrial laws allow workers access to union officials during non-working times or in meal-breaks in the workplace. Victorian industrial laws should also allow this	63	25

Apart from the following exceptions, these results are similar across the various demographics of location, employee size, gender and type of business...

Statement	Comments
<i>There should be an independent umpire to assist in resolving industrial disputes</i>	There is higher support (98%) in companies employing ten or more people
<i>All businesses should have to meet the same basic minimum standards of wages and conditions for their employees</i>	There is higher support in... C non-metro areas (77%) C companies with ten or more staff (79%)
<i>Businesses should be able to set their own levels of wages and conditions without any legal minimum standards for employees</i>	This hypothesis is <u>rejected</u> more strongly by... C employers with ten or more staff (71%) C females (68%)

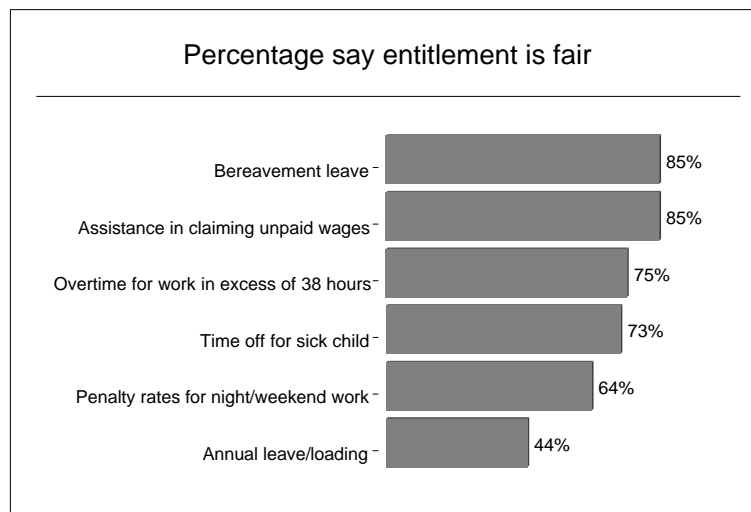
Small Business Attitudes to
Industrial Relations in Victoria
An Executive Summary

Statement	Comments
<i>Independent contractors such as owner-drivers and couriers should have an independent umpire to turn to in disputes with larger companies</i>	There is a higher than average level of support amongst... C non-metro based respondents (83%) C females (85%)
<i>An independent umpire should have the power for both conciliation and arbitration in disputes</i>	Companies with ten or more employees are more likely than others to agree with this (86%)

Sweeney Research

ATTITUDES TO FEDERAL AWARD ENTITLEMENTS:

Employer attitudes to six possible award entitlements are depicted below...



Hence, there is strong majority support for all except an annual leave loading. This particular entitlement receives far higher support amongst females (54%) and relatively less support in non-metro areas (39%).

Interestingly, females are also more in favour of penalties for night and weekend work than their male counterparts (75% vs. 58%).

Small Business Attitudes to
Industrial Relations in Victoria
An Executive Summary

PROPOSED LAW CHANGES:

Only one-third (39%) of small business sector employers are aware that the Victorian Government is considering amendments to laws to ensure minimum conditions of employment apply to low paid workers.

Despite this relatively low level of awareness, a significant majority (73%) believe the Government should introduce this legislation and that it should be passed by both Houses of Parliament.

Females are more strongly supportive of the proposed changes than males (81% vs. 69%).