

“COSBOA supports Policy not Parties”

A comparison table of small business policies between the major parties

Below is listed COSBOA policy position & statements from the major parties where available and applicable to COSBOA’s election priorities. This may change as we get closer to the election; there are more comprehensive versions covering other policy areas available on our website.

COSBOA	Coalition	Labor
Worker shortages – skilled migration		
<p>We want better engagement with industry associations to determine skilled migration lists to make them fit for purpose</p> <p>Work to reduce the cost to small business, complexity of applications, time required to process, and timelines for departmental approval</p> <p>Temporarily remove restrictions on number of work hours and work location for migrants (e.g., international students, spouses).</p>	<p>Ensure that skilled stream places account for around 70% of the migration program in 2022-23</p> <p>Continue to deliver faster, cheaper skills assessments.</p>	<p>Reform the Pacific Australia Labour Mobility Scheme’s Seasonal Worker Program:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensure Federal Government meets upfront travel costs for workers - Allow participants to bring family members to live and work in Australia - Establish dedicated Agriculture visa stream (four-year visa).
<p>COSBOA Commentary Coalition policy acknowledges the challenges in the assessment process but indicates no change to the current situation; in fact, migration numbers would remain the same. 6/10 Labor policy addresses only workers from the Pacific with no mention of skilled migration from other regions of the world. 5.5/10</p>		
COSBOA	Coalition	Labor
Worker shortages – workforce development, skills, and productivity		
<p>We want to allow those who wish to engage with more work to do so by removing barriers such as negative impacts on tax, access to benefits, and pension</p> <p>Place more emphasis on completion rates and continued education for trainees</p>	<p>Skills and Training Boost (20% bonus tax deduction for businesses investing in external training)</p> <p>Boosting Apprenticeship Commencements and Completing Apprenticeship Commencements wage subsidies extended for 3 months. This was a COVID support measure which</p>	<p>Fee Free TAFE Plan for industries with skills shortages (465,000 fee-free places over 4 years, of which 45,000 would be new places - industries mentioned include ‘trades and construction, resources, digital and cyber security, new energy, advanced manufacturing, hospitality, tourism, childcare, aged care, disability care, nursing, and community services)</p>

<p>Tax incentives for small businesses and sole traders to train employees</p> <p>For incentives to go beyond one industry/ skills area – e.g., have incentives for management skills, not just digital skills</p> <p>Continue industry led skills reform where small business is consulted on strategy, workforce, as well as product development.</p>	<p>has been extended an additional 3 months to support small business as they transition back to a new COVID normal.</p> <p>\$2.8 billion for a streamlined Australian Apprenticeships Incentive System from 1 Jul 22</p> <p>\$3.7 billion to support 800,000 training places over 5 years (if states agree to a new funding deal)</p> <p>\$49.5 million to expand the JobTrainer program (if states match funding) for 15,000 places to support aged care sector.</p>	<p>\$50 million to boost technology on TAFE campuses</p> <p>Ensure at least 70% of Commonwealth VET funding is for TAFE</p> <p>Establish a body called Jobs and Skills Australia to replace the National Skills Commission that would work with employers, unions, and the VET sector on workforce planning</p> <p>Deliver a new national skills agreement working in partnership with states and territories</p> <p>Commit to greater industry participation in the skills and training sector to encourage better collaboration and outcomes.</p>
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COSBOA Commentary:

The Coalition policy of bonus tax deduction for skills and training is excellent but it is important that non-employing business owners can themselves access this scheme to upskill the business owner. The Boosting & Completing Apprenticeship schemes are excellent but should be extended beyond just 3 months – this doesn’t enable small businesses to plan for the future. Policy relies too heavily on states matching funds which may lead to a discrepancy between states. Skills and training boosts are welcomed but are a medium-long term solution – it doesn’t address the critical shortages our members are experiencing now. **7/10**

Labor policy addresses more areas of need for the medium-long term skills-based solution, and the acknowledges the different skills small business needs to grow and innovate, not just the hard hats. Although it suggests consultation with employers, more detail is needed on the Jobs and Skills Australia and “new” national skills agreement schemes to understand the long -erm implications. **7.5/10**

Both parties recognise the hard work by industries to improve the sector through VET skills reform, which is positive.

COSBOA	Coalition	Labor
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Costs of doing business – supply chain costs / inflation

<p>This is an immediate problem for all small businesses.</p> <p>Address the criticality of supply chain issues and the impact they are having on small business’ input costs.</p>	<p>\$200 million Supply Chain Resiliency Initiative as part of the Regional Accelerator Program announced in the 22-23 Budget (grants for manufacturing businesses to address a supply chain vulnerability for an eligible critical product/ input, e.g, chips)</p> <p>\$2.5 billion modern manufacturing strategy (e.g., modern manufacturing initiative to help manufacturing businesses scale-up, manufacturing modernisation fund round two).</p>	<p>A \$15 billion National Reconstruction Fund which designed to build supply chain resilience across the economy. It will fund projects across a range of industries to expand manufacturing self-sufficiency.</p> <p>Includes \$1 billion advanced manufacturing fund to support manufacturing businesses of all sizes</p> <p>Fund additional industry grants across Australia to build supply chain resilience</p> <p>Start-up Year, which would offer income contingent loans to 2,000 final year students and recent graduates to</p>
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COSBOA Commentary:
Coalition policy importantly acknowledges the criticality of the supply chain and addresses vulnerabilities which does assist all small businesses, also addresses the need to transition regional areas back to Australian manufacturing however the determination of an “eligible” critical product is out of the hands of small business. For them, all supply chain inputs are critical. **8.5/10**

Labor’s policy doesn’t acknowledge the supply chain issues facing all small businesses; there is more of a focus on manufacturing sector. More detail is needed on how industry grants would work - often supply chain issues are horizontal and across industries. **7/10**

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Costs of doing business – merchant fees

<p>We want to have a mandate for least cost routing as (the default).</p> <p>Mandate that all debit cards work on more than one network (multi-network debit cards)</p> <p>Create a dual network provision in mobile wallets</p>	<p>Bring the authority to legislate the payments systems framework into the Treasury Portfolio so that the Government can directly create outcomes for small businesses in this area to reduce the cost to small businesses of doing business, specifically including the ability to modernise payments system legislation to accommodate new systems like BNPL and digital wallets.</p>	<p>Mandate least cost routing (or similar) as soon as they come to office, with a clear timeline for implementation.</p>
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COSBOA Commentary:
Coalition policy through the Farrell review has started the hard work of modernising the payment system and incorporating BNPL and digital wallets into the system to make it fairer (which is complex and will take time) but fees are another immediate problem. In their election policies they haven’t specifically address the need to reduce fees which small businesses are paying. **7.5/10**

Labor policy hasn’t addressed the complexity of the payments system but they have explicitly indicated that they will mandate least cost routing which is exactly what COSBOA has asked for. **9/10**

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Industrial relations

<p>We want to Insert a Model Schedule into modern awards relevant to small businesses to enable them to develop a BOOT with their employees</p> <p>Codesign with industry associations to assist with a Model Schedule fit for purpose for their industry</p>	<p>Establish a dedicated small business unit in the Fair Work Commission to help small business navigate their workplace obligations. This measure is designed to specifically support small business to deal with fair work issues, acknowledging that they are often less resourced in HR, and will benefit from someone who understands</p>	<p>Make wage theft a criminal offence</p> <p>Use relationship with unions and industry to deliver better outcomes with settings that are simpler, more accessible and fair</p>
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<p>Support Industry groups to continue educating and assisting their small business members with their award</p> <p>All stakeholders (employer & employee groups) come to the table to find a solution to wage underpayment, recognising that underpayment is anticompetitive & agree on a way forward on criminalising underpayments</p> <p>We also support the continuation of the current process for wage determination.</p>	<p>business being able to advise and support them on through any of these processes.</p> <p>Pass the reforms in the IR Omnibus Bill (includes BOOT reform, Greenfields agreement, ability for part-timers to work overtime at regular wage, criminalisation of wage theft).</p>	<p>Work with COSBOA and the ACTU to develop simpler and more certain workplace relations environments for small businesses</p> <p>Enshrine secure work as an objective of the Fair Work Act</p> <p>Enshrine “same job, same pay” into law.</p>
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COSBOA Commentary:
Coalition policy is light on detail but builds on the work from 2021’s Omnibus Bill. It’s also pleasing as it indicates they will pick up where the Omnibus Bill left off (where COSBOA was taking the lead) and this addresses COSBOA’s calls to simplify the system. However, a FWC small business unit would be helpful but is more of a band-aid solution to the real issue; that the system is simply too complex for a small business to navigate themselves. COSBOA agrees to harsher penalties for those underpaying wages as it is anti-competitive.

7/10

Labor also wants to criminalise wage theft (which COSBOA supports) but the “same job, same pay” policy is very concerning – COSBOA sees this as a way to add more complexity to the system, not improve it. Secure work is complex and employment may not be suitable in all circumstances. Labor doesn’t acknowledge how, in the last few years, the landscape has evolved. Though vague, the goal of simplicity is commendable. **5.5/10**

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