

MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release



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Retail still ignored by digital economy strategy

The Fair Imports Alliance has praised the Government's commitment to a national digital economy strategy but said, in reality, retail is still being ignored by some areas of government that don't grasp the need to engage the changing retail marketplace in the digital economy.

The Fair Imports Alliance had written to the Minister for Small Business Nick Sherry expressing concern that the \$14 million AusIndustry Small Business Online (SBO) Funding Program failed to provide specific support for retailers.

Fair Imports Alliance spokesperson Brad Kitschke criticised the Minister Sherry's response and said there didn't appear to be a genuine understanding of retail industry needs, or of the failure of the SBO program to address these needs.

"We've been told to refer retailers to existing SBO funding recipients for assistance. However, the Fair Imports Alliance attempted to contact every provider who was granted money and their capacity to meet the needs of retail is limited.

"Of those SBO funding recipients able to be contacted, many advised their funding had run out, or their funding was only for specific geographic areas, or they had a limited skill base and capacity to deliver training to the retail sector.

"Only a handful of SBO funding recipients advised they would be willing and able to assist retailers. Of those who responded positively, few have demonstrated a contemporary grasp of retail market trends and an appropriate understanding of new media, including social media and m-commerce.

"Many of the contact details and web addresses on the Government's own website are out of date. This is just not good enough.

"Retailers are facing tremendous change with an increase in online sales and a rapidly shifting marketplace and there hasn't been any funding programs developed specifically to help Australian retailers adapt. Retail needs help immediately and while it's positive the Government is creating a roadmap for the future, we are concerned it might be too late," Kitschke said.

The Fair Imports Alliance comprises the following organisations: Australian Retailers Association (ARA), Australian Sporting Goods Association (ASGA), Bicycle Industries Australia (BIA), Australian Toy Association (ATA), Photo Marketing Association (PMA), Australian Fishing Trade Association (AFTA), Australian Booksellers Association (ABA), Australian Music Association (AMA) and the Retail Cycle Traders Australian (RCTA). For more information visit: www.fairimportsalliance.org.au or email fairimportsalliance@retail.org.au or call 1300 368 041.

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**Released by the Fair Imports Alliance Secretariat:
For Interviews with Brad Kitschke call 0403 809 630**



AUSTRALIAN BOOKSELLERS ASSOCIATION



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Australian Toy Association