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New research by MYOB reveals the strong likelihood of a hung vote amongst Australia's small to medium business operators (SMEs), with only half saying a Liberal government would do a better job in supporting businesses like theirs.

50% believe Liberal would be an improvement on the current Labor government in this respect, with 29% saying it would do 'a lot' better and 21% 'a little' better. 28% believe it would do a similar job and 18% believe it would do a worse job.

Liberal Party support was highest among those over 65 years of age and lowest amongst the youngest. 52% of the over 65's believe Liberal would do 'a lot better', compared to only 12% of their Generation Y counterparts.

Further, 44% of SMEs overall said they have the most trust in Liberal to appropriately manage the economy (56% of over 65's) while 18% have more trust in Labor (37% of Gen Y business operators). 26% of business operators said they didn't trust any party, and Nationals, Greens and 'Other' had less than 5% apiece.

MYOB CEO Tim Reed says, "When it comes to the votes of small to medium business operators, one quarter is still undecided – 26% said they didn't trust any party more than another to manage our economy. This highlights a great opportunity for both parties to get vocal about their game-changing initiatives for this sector, the engine room of Australia's economy. They are a sector that accounts for a significant proportion of the voting public."

The August 2013 MYOB Business Monitor Report surveyed 1,022 SMEs and is the latest wave of an ongoing national study Australia's largest accounting software provider has commissioned to Colmar Brunton since 2004.

Trust and satisfaction

The research also discovered a small lift in satisfaction with the support provided by the Federal Government for helping SMEs succeed. Satisfaction rose to 16% from 14% in the March 2013 report, while dissatisfaction fell from 54% to 50%. 34% were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, up from 32%.

Mr Reed says, "I am pleased to see the increased attention the election campaigns have had on small business issues in recent weeks. To give SMEs a stronger share of voice, MYOB explored their political views and it's clear they need stronger government support. Although we saw a slight attitudinal improvement in our latest research, 50% are dissatisfied with the current government, so it's no surprise 50% believe the opposition would do a better job in catering to their needs."

SME election wish-list revealed

Making business life easier by reducing paperwork burden, abolishing the carbon tax and investing further in infrastructure are the leading initiatives that will help win the most election votes. The survey presented 16 policies/initiatives and asked 'With this year's Federal Election, which of the following would get you to vote for or against the party that proposed them'. Business operators (SMEs) said the party proposing the following would receive their 'for' vote:

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| Policies that significantly simplify the GST/BAS reporting process – 67% | The abolition of the carbon tax – 62% | More Federal Government investment in transport infrastructure in our major states & cities – 61% |
| Increased Federal Government funding for skills, training & apprenticeship programs – 58% | A proportion of Government procurement contracts being assigned to small businesses – 55% | Increased Government funding for innovation, research & development – 54% |
| Government backed loans to small business start-ups – 52% | | |

creation of a single flat tax for personal tax & company tax – 51% Provide free Government-funded training to all small businesses on how to use the internet to enhance & grow their business – 48% Continuation of the tax loss carry back scheme – 45% The abolition of the mining tax – 41% The abolition of the GST – 38% Remove the \$1000 threshold at which GST is collected on goods purchased from abroad – 34%

The abolition of the rise of the Superannuation Guarantee Levy from 9% to 12% by July 2019 – 33% Make the ATO responsible for distribution of staff superannuation & maternity leave payments – 31% Introduction of a paid parental leave levy for all businesses – 19% Mr Reed says, "It's no surprise business owners and managers continue to call for tax reform, deregulation and reduction of red tape. GST and BAS simplification tops the list of initiatives that could turn an election on its head, closely followed by the abolishment of the carbon tax. This is despite earlier MYOB research that revealed only 36% said it was unimportant to their business. And with fuel prices always the top pressure point, it's no wonder 61% will vote for the party that proposed more investment in city transport infrastructure."

Government interaction needs

Respondents were asked what was most important when dealing with government for business, and the number one response was 'The information I get is accurate, reliable and easy to understand' (42%). This was followed by 'It is easy to understand what to do' (35%), then 'If I have a problem, it is resolved without passing me on to another area' (32%).

Courtesy and availability also ranked highly, tying for fourth place at 25% of respondents – 'The people I deal with treat me professionally and with courtesy' and 'I can get support at a time that is convenient to me'.

Delving deeper into dissatisfaction

Respondents in the agriculture, forestry and fishing sector were the most dissatisfied with Federal Government support (69%), a rise from 66% in the March 2013 report and well ahead of the other sectors. This was followed by those in manufacturing and wholesale, retail and hospitality, and transport, postal and warehousing (51% each). Conversely, manufacturing and wholesale operators were the most satisfied (23%).

Looking at the mainland states, nearly three fifths of Queenslanders were dissatisfied with Federal Government support (59%) – the highest proportion of any state. This was followed by those in Victoria (48%) and New South Wales (43%). Conversely, New South Welshmen were the most satisfied (22%).

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About the MYOB Business Monitor

Established in 2004, the MYOB Business Monitor is a national survey of small and medium business owners and managers, commissioned to independent market research firm Colmar Brunton. The most recent study ran in July and August 2013, surveying 1,022 operators from sole traders to mid-sized companies, representing the major industry sectors. The Monitor researches business performance and attitudes around areas such as profitability, cash flow, pipeline work, technology usage and government. Note: the weighting of MYOB client and non-client respondents is reflective of overall market proportions. For this survey, generations were: Generation Y: 18-29 years, Generation X: 30-49 years, Baby Boomers: 50-64 years and Traditionalists: 65+ years. Length of time in business was: start-up: less than 2 years, establishing: 2-5 years, maturing: 5-10 years, established: 10+ years.

About MYOB Australia

Established in 1991, MYOB is Australia's largest business management solutions provider. It makes life easier for over 1.2 million businesses across Australia and New Zealand, and provides support via many client service channels including a network of over 20,000 accounting firms, bookkeepers and other consultants. MYOB's solutions simplify accounting, payroll, tax, practice management, CRM, websites, job costing, inventory and more, for businesses of all shapes and sizes. It is committed to ongoing innovation, particularly in cloud computing solutions, and now spends more than AU\$30 million annually on research and development. In 2013, MYOB expanded its offerings with the acquisition of accounting solutions provider BankLink. For more information, visit myob.com.au.