

# Enterprise

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## SMEs want more information about ETS

**Mark Fenton-Jones**

Small businesses have called for more debate about the proposed emissions trading scheme.

The call for more discussion was one of the top recommendations to emerge from the latest SME Boardroom poll which was conducted the same week that internal divisions within the Liberal Party leadership over the ETS led to Tony Abbott's election as its leader.

The other strong theme was that small businesses do not want Australia to lead the way on the ETS, suggesting that the government "wait until later, or after Copenhagen, or until other countries have made a decision".

Also top of their ETS wish list was

the removal of "the politics and hijacking by academics and lobbyists and focus on the debate to alleviate the problems".

Established earlier this year to give SMEs a "united voice", SME Boardroom produced its December white paper on the ETS to inform government and the wider business community how the ETS will "really affect SMEs so that they are able to protect the interests of SMEs in Australia".

SME Boardroom chairwoman Kim Mei-Li Dennis said: "I don't see us as lobbyists. Our objective is to give grass roots views to government and opposition so they can make better policy for SMEs."

Generally, SMEs have a basic knowledge (72.4 per cent) of how

the ETS works. About a third want it introduced, a third don't and a third are not sure if they want an ETS introduced. "People who support the ETS do so because they see it as a way of helping improve the

### **The ETS is likely to raise costs and taxes and result in less cashflow.**

environment; they see it as a solution," Ms Dennis said.

"Those against the ETS are not against fixing the environment. They are just saying the ETS is not the right solution. Increasing taxes won't fix the environment as no one knows how they will be spent and if

Australia's input will have any effect on the environment anywhere."

A little more than half (51.7 per cent) expect the ETS to affect their business while a substantial 35.6 per cent are not sure of any potential impact. "The major way in which the introduction of the ETS will affect SMEs is that it will result in increased costs and taxes, and less cashflow and profits," the survey states.

More than a third (36.3 per cent) expect the ETS will result in increased costs in electricity, fuel, food and water.

Last month, the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry criticised the then negotiated package between the government and opposition as not providing any price compensation for small busi-

nesses that faced up to 24 per cent higher electricity costs.

Meanwhile, some participants to the SME Boardroom survey believe that an ETS would make Australian businesses less competitive internationally.

But others view the ETS as a plus for business because it will give them a competitive advantage over their carbon polluting competitors.

"It will result in new jobs and businesses growing out of the changes," the survey says.

The federal government this past week gave a total of \$2.8 million in grants to 13 manufacturers under the fourth round of its Re-tooling for Climate Change program.

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