

31 January 2018

## Staffing a key concern for Canberra SMEs

The results of the latest *Canberra Business Chamber - Deloitte SME Survey* indicates labour force issues and increasing overhead costs remain a key concern for local SMEs seeking to grow.

At the same time, local small businesses are also generating new job opportunities for many Canberrans.

Releasing the results today, Canberra Business chamber CEO Dr Michael Schaper said, "Nearly one-third of respondents have either increased staff numbers slightly or significantly. This indicates they have confidence in the future of the capital region.

"However, long-term access to skilled labour continues to be one of the major challenges for ACT small businesses.

"Canberra currently has low unemployment, so competition for available workers is strong," Dr Schaper stated. "Small businesses in the ACT have to compete with large organisations for skilled staff. This can push up wages to a point where small firms can no longer afford to offer jobs.

"As a result, many businesses are considering employing lower-skilled workers and training them up. Over two-thirds of businesses are considering new models for acquiring the right workforce composition and skills needs.

"Addressing skills and workforce shortages is a priority for Canberra Business Chamber. We are working with local businesses, government and our tertiary education sector to provide more opportunities for work-integrated learning for people studying in the ACT, and to match courses with local business needs."

The results also show local businesses are increasing their product and service offerings in order to grow, as well as adapting to rapid societal and marketplace change.

"The good news is that respondents told us that access to financial and physical capital is sufficient for their anticipated growth.

"Many barriers to growth still exist, however. A key one is owners finding time to work on the business rather than in the business. Operating margins and profits are also tight. Cost inflation in the ACT is currently running slightly higher than top line revenue growth."

Canberra Business Chamber has partnered with Deloitte to undertake regular surveys of local businesses and develop a time series of business sentiment. The findings released today are from the fourth survey in this series.

**Media Contact:** Dr Michael Schaper, CEO, Canberra Business Chamber T: +61 02 6247 4199

**Download the report:** [www.canberrabusiness.com/canberra-small-business-survey/](http://www.canberrabusiness.com/canberra-small-business-survey/)