

The Connected Small Business

TERESA CORBIN: Just looking down the back, are we ready to go down the back? Yes? One minute? OK. I think we will be which the time I get through.

OK, so this afternoon, we have a very exciting panel. But this is the first time that we've actually looked at small business, and so I wanted to take the opportunity to say that small business faces some of the same issues as general consumers in relation to communications and small businesses are also able to lodge complaints with the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman and ACCAN has a dedicated small business project officer for this reason because we do think that their issues are just that little bit different, that we need to try and understand a little bit better what their uses are and how their issues relate to the more broader issues. I want to introduce Peter Strong to you, from COSBOA, which is the council of small business of Australia, and he is going to launch an exciting new initiative for us, the digital biscuits, and digital ready project. You will see you would have had a little invitation in your program with some further details of some of our panellists that are joining in relation to that but we will play a video and then Peter will kick off.

VOICEOVER: We live in a fast-paced world. Every day, new technologies emerge, giving us new ways to connect. It's now easier than ever to bring your business, club or community online, or expand your online presence. You work in the arts, in recreation, or in education. You're an expert at what you do. You bring people together. You share your passion. You inspire your community. With digital technology, you can get back to doing what you love best. Find out how to work smarter and faster with our free online tools at digitalready.org.au. digitalready.org.au is brought to you by ACCAN, the Australian Communications Consumer Action Network. Here, you'll find our online learning tools, which show you how to use technology to increase your customer base and stay connected with your customers. The ACCAN Digital Business Kit will show you how technology can help you in four key ways. Save – save time, save money. Reach out – increase your audience, keep them engaged. Stay up to date – learn new methods to manage and grow your community – meet their changing needs. Grow – increase sales, membership and productivity – go global. The digital age is here. With the right tools and the right strategy, you can share in its benefits. Anything is possible. Get digital ready, and be ready for tomorrow today. Start our free, easy-to-use online learning tools now, and take advantage of the digital revolution at digitalready.org.au.

PETER STRONG: Thank you very much, and it's great to be here, with ACCAN, especially launching something as important as digital ready. It's something we have been talking about for a long, long time and the importance of it to small business is about survival – maybe not always, but in a lot of cases it is about survival. It it's about stress management, I might add, because all small businesses are nothing but people in the end and if we don't manage our stress everything suffers – the family, the business, our health, et cetera. I mean, one of the sectors we're looking at, I think, is the health sector and health is very important to the small business community and we're often left out of health discussions, so it's nice to see we're going to be picked up here and we can take care of our own health and stress using these sorts of devices we've got here. Has anybody ever done this, where you say to an audience, who has been tweeting? What have we all tweeted at the same time with something? Would that trend? Is that the way it works?

(LAUGHTER)

Probably would. So we should go hashtag ACCAN and then go "Launch of DBK" and then the website. Wait until I say and we'll all hit send at the same time and crash the internet!

(LAUGHTER)

Well, crash Twitter, anyway. Everybody ready? No misspelling. I'll give you a few minutes.

And while we're doing that, the kit targets the arts, recreation and education services, which is fascinating. Getting education services up to speed with the digital economy – some of them are very good and have really latched on to it and there's others that have not done that. Anybody here disagree that others haven't done that? There's some very good ones out there and we're in dialogue with Minister McPharlin. Everybody ready to tweet? Oh!

NEW SPEAKER: Selfie!

(LAUGHTER)

PETER STRONG: Nice. Please tweet as you feel free and we will be trending. The ABC will be ringing us all up soon – what's going on!

So, the education sector is a really important area online. I was looking at the latest e-learning thing the other week. You probably all know this, but it is a video these people put together and it's using gaming, so that it's teaching public servants about security. They show a video and you have to touch where you think there has been a security breach. And he's got to get 7 out of the 15. If you touch it you get a click, so someone in the lift is talking about private issues that shouldn't be discussed in the lift, or someone has tailgated someone through the areas where you are supposed to use your tag, so you touch it and it is like a game. They were saying most people only have to get seven off the 15 to pass. That's appalling, 7 off 15. But most people go back to do the 15, because it is a game. And I can understand that. So some people are really embracing this sort of thing. And we've got people on our panel who are way ahead of me on these sorts of things as well. Or people, sorry, for the launch. I've got the wrong thing open. So I should introduce... my what?

TERESA CORBIN: We've got a nice little segue now.

PETER STRONG: The video?

TERESA CORBIN: Yes, so I will do this. We've got a little video Peter made which we think summarises what small business's issues are across the board. So we might just kick that one off. Then we'll go to you, Peter, to run the panel.

PETER STRONG:

Many of us have a story to tell
About having a plan and some things to sell
If I got my plan right then I thought I couldn't lose
And that's when I got the small-business blues
I opened the doors and got autonomy
Joined the backbone of the economy
I thought I was working for myself
But really I was working for the Commonwealth
Commonwealth, Common-Commonwealth
I lodge my BAS and pay the GST
I pay the staff and do P-A-Y-G
I lodge online and store my records in the cloud
I curse compliance and the government out loud
(BLEEP) you, compliance!
I make sure we're safe through OH&S
Never made a mistake but I must confess
Owning this place is no good for my health
Thanks to the rules of the Commonwealth
My business plan is full of black holes
And I can't compete with Woolies and Coles
My budget going forward is out of accord
Because I've just been screwed by a big landlord
Westfields, Stocklands, QIC
I can't stand 'em
The bastards
I went to the bank to get a loan
I'm happy and working my fingers to the bone
But you're too high-risk
..says the loan calculator
Because I'm a dumb small-business operator
Thanks for nothing

Now I'm a slave for the whole nation
Collecting all their superannuation
And nobody seems to give a damn
The collection process is one big scam
One big scam
And it is, I'm telling ya
Then I started off to church to see my rector
And then I got a call from a health inspector
Now it seems my licence renewal is late
So he said
Mate, I'm closing it down till some future date
The bastard
So I'm fed up and I had a blue with my staff
They walked out, all I could do was laugh
So I went to have a beer at the Pig 'N' Whistle
Now they've taken me to court for constructive dismissal
So I sold my shop 'cause I couldn't survive
Now I'm working for a corporate from 9 to 5
I've got plenty of leave and plenty of pay
And it helps chase the small-business blues away
That's all there is to this narration
About having a dream to own my own operation
Trying to help this country's economic foundation
Just to get knocked down by the red tape nation
Red tape nation
Red tape nation

(APPLAUSE)

Thank you, thank you! Thank you. And I have to say, the reason that we did that is because small business is different. You wouldn't see the head of BCA – and she is a fantastic person, she says she wants to do a rap song – she never would! Not in a million years. We are different and we act different and we need to bring our issues differently to people. Now, before I pass on to the panel I have been asked just to talk about some of the small business issues that we have at the moment, besides the fact that the government backdated the tax changes to before the election, but I'll leave that alone.

Training. About two years ago, I think about a quarter of my members thought that training was an issue. Vocational education and training for themselves and their employees. Now it's probably three quarters. Really quite an interesting change over the last couple of years. They're very disappointed with what's going on and they want it to change and I think what we're seeing today and what we launched before is part of that process. Red tape as always is an issue and often people complain about the red tape but you can't name it, you just know you hate it. A lot of that is around the attitude that we used to get in the main from regulators, so we had regulators who would say, look, that's – you know, just do it, that's your job, you are in business, get over it, move on. Which they never said a second time to me and people like me, because the better regulators are now part of the industry in which they regulate. So they don't see themselves as above it. They don't go looking for problems. We always say a good regulator – well, a bad regulator is someone who, say, in the transport sector, they will catch a truck driver and fine him. And they think, "Great I've done my job" go back and do high-fives in the office. The better regulator fines a truck driver and says, "Right, my job has just begun, because we don't want that to happen again". And that's what we're seeing, with these changes coming across, more and more across regulators, they're changing their attitude. We know that for small business you can get the policy right and public servants are pretty smart, I was a public servant for a long time and I thought I was smart and I thought the people around me were smart, mainly. But what you find is that, if you don't have the right communications around that policy or if the process to implement that policy is not achievable, then the policy fails. And with small business, it really is so much about process and so much about communications. Again, technology is going to be, if it's not already, a boon for us and it will make it easier because of that and with some of the people here today I will be talking about the communication benefits of the superintendent and what have you.

Change management is a huge thing, of course, because we live in a world of constant change, do we not? I come out of the book industry, I used to own a bookshop in Canberra and you I think most of us know the book industry went through a big change with e-books and what have you and I think Nick Sherry said at one stage there would be no book industry in a few years' time but it has bounced back because there are smaller industry bookshops, and they have been able to respond to their customers. They've embraced change and the internet and e-books and they work with it. So they went through a period where their sales dropped without a doubt and now the sales are back up against. Quite fascinating. So change management is a big issue for anybody in small business. The transport sector is full of change around technology. A lot of – I was talking to someone from the CSIRO before and we were talking about some people and what their view of technology is. So you get people in the transport sector saying we don't embrace it, yet their truck is constantly talking to a satellite or something somewhere informing them on their speed and how much petrol they are using or whatever. So some people aren't even aware they are in change.

Tax is always an issue for us and cutting costs is always interesting. If I can, just before I move on to the panel, there's one thing I want to talk about is communications with small business. When I had my shop, it was Smith's Alternative Bookshop – an alternative bookshop means you can do what you want, and that's fantastic. But I went to the COSBOA and I met this fella and he told me about the Cloud. I had a book about clouds, I tried to sell it to him but he didn't mean that, he meant something else! And he explained it to me and it made sense and he said, good, you should use it, and I said, I will one day. Because to use something you have to go through this change process and it takes time. Anyway, he came back a month later and said "Are you in the Cloud yet" and I said remind are you going to buy this book now" and he said no and left. But he came back and we kept talking and one day he said to me, you won't need a server. And there is what he should have said from day one. Forget this description of a Cloud, what does it mean to me? And it meant I didn't have to have the horrible server on 24/7, rebooted every five seconds, which staff would do something wrong to or whatever and that was the winning point. Forget about the Cloud – I didn't need the bill that you get with running a 24/7 server. So there's the lesson, I always say – have a look at the benefits and not the features. Talk to me about the benefits and talk to me in the language that I understand.

A thing has just come up on my iPad saying I have to do my BAS as well! The world of small business! I have to remember now, because I've just taken it off!

So, ladies and gentlemen – Teresa, help me! Oh! Are reluctant to change? Let me say, this is interesting. It depends who you talk to. We are people, everybody is a person, and different sectors react differently to these things. So people in the book industry who couldn't change no longer are in the industry have gone. They are working for somebody else or they're working somewhere else. So we can't categorise people. We can't generalise and say we don't want to change. It depends upon the individual, the culture of the sectors that they will live in and the way that he embrace change. It depends upon their age and it depends upon the challenges they have for that you are business. Also, I might add, it depends upon the situation in their personal lives. I think we often forget that you might be about to get married, about to be divorced, you might have teenagers, god bless those people! You might have a new child, you might be unwell. Anything could be happening to any person could be happening to small businesses and the best advisers and those that get involved understand work with the small business person and not with the small business.

I would like to now introduce – sorry, I jumped ahead of myself! Leonie Smith, who is going to come up and talk about her personal experiences in what prompted her to get online, what assistance might have been available or not, impressions of government funding and the positives and challenges for Leonie Smith's business. Thank you.

LEONIE SMITH: Shall I do it from here? OK. I've wren notes so I don't waffle. My background was originally in the arts, first as a graphic designer and then as a performer. I went to drama school. I trained as an actress singer and I eventually took up jazz singing as my profession and I did that for 20 years. After a 20-year career as a performer, I kind of fell into cyber-safety after developing a parallel set of skills in online marketing and multimedia I cannot developed over the same 20-year period. So it really started when my family got our first computer in 1995. And I discovered the internet through AOL and discovered a whole bunch of forums that I could join, forums for parents of kids with disabilities, because I had some kids – my own children – had disabilities and also musicians' forums where I could share music, talk to other musicians, find other ways of getting my music bought and

sold online well before iTunes. MP3.com was one I joined where people would vote your music up. That gave me an enormous amount of power as an independent musician because it was very difficult to get your music sold in the bricks and mortar stores. So I was self-taught. There weren't any classes at the time. It was pretty much everybody was doing their own thing and you had to sort of find your own way through it and I built my own website from Microsoft Publisher, would you believe, in the late 90s! Just made the mistakes as I went along, sort of thing. So being a self-taught early adopter, joining online support groups, I also helped found Aussie Deaf Kids which was a support group for parents of kids who had hearing loss and there wasn't a really great support network in those days in the mid-90s for that. It is still going really strong. It is the biggest online support group at the moment and at the moment we're dealing with issues of Australian hearing wanting to be privatised and all that kind of stuff so that gave me an introduction into being an online moderator and what all that was about.

I've used the services of a government-funded program a couple of years. I did a women in business program which has been discontinued, actually, and it was absolutely amazing. I was given a mentor, because I decided that I wanted to really make my cyber-safety business my main business after live music, basically, went down the toilet in Sydney! I stopped getting gigs, basically. And it was a passion of mine – having an older son, who is now 17, with Asperger's and a hearing impairment meant that he was incredibly benefitted by technology but also incredibly vulnerable. Experiences that he had with online stalking and bullying meant that I used my past skills to be able to protect him from getting hurt further and then, when I was asked by someone at my son's school about Facebook, which I had been on right from the early days, I had all this knowledge over 20 years that I had picked up from being on social media before anybody knew it was social media. I gave my first talk and somebody said, "That was great, do another one" and it has kind of spiralled from there. And I have an amazing passion for it, so it helps me.

The women in business program helped me with a business plan, which I need and I know I'm supposed to look at it every twelve months to see how far along I'm going. I had a mentor. I learnt all sorts of things about finances and insurance and stuff like that, that is the basic building blocks for business. The positives of my business are that I'm in a niche industry. It's a growing industry. I'm passionate about it. I have a unique set of skills, which is completely self-taught, but as a parent of four children, two older ones that are now 31 and 29, who started on the internet in 1995, I've seen the whole thing grow, my youngest kids – now 14 and 17 – are right at the coal face and I'm with them. I have a big interest in gaming. I spent quite a few years in Second Life almost running a business in there so I got involved heavily in virtual worlds and social media, using multimedia I cannot, YouTube before anybody knew what YouTube was. So I love it, and the kids love it. My challenges are that I'm competing with much larger organisations, government-funded organisations, that are often giving away cyber-safety talks for free. I come at it from a completely different perspective. I'm not computer engineer, I am not an ex-policewoman, I give extremely practical talks on how to be a parent in this digital age from the perspective of somebody who loves it, not somebody who wants to ban the whole thing.

Another challenge I have is that there is no such thing as a cyber-safety degree at this stage. There's lots of different courses you can do, so explaining to people where I get my expertise from can be quite challenging. And that's me, thank you.

(APPLAUSE)

NEW SPEAKER: I've just got a note here. If I could get Tim and Helen to introduce themselves quickly, because we don't have notes in the agenda, so Helen? Would you like to say who you are and where you are from and where you are here?

HELEN PERRIS: Sure. My name is Helen Perris, and I'm a singer/song writer. It was interesting listening to Leonie, because a lot of things she was saying is where I am at now. I'm a gigging artist, I sell my music online. I also run a business at the same time where I'm involved in teaching young performers. And I've got websites for my performing and websites for my teaching as well as Facebook presences and I'm on Twitter and all of that sort of stuff. So I'm really into using social media to promote what I do and to engage with my audience, with my fans, and with potential fans. Yeah, and I'm using e-commerce, obviously, as well. It's – I don't know, for me, it's totally a natural thing to do, because I am – I'm not quite young enough to be what they call a "Digital native", but I

was using computers in school and then the internet was sort of becoming big when I was in high school, and I got involved in forums and all sorts of things like that when I was at university. So, I have been involved in the online world for probably most of my life, really, but not quite as digital native as my kids will be, obviously. For me, it's – it has been really interesting making connections with people all over the world. I recently connected with a composer who is in Brisbane, I bought his music online, he emailed me, and I emailed him back and then he realised that I was someone who wrote music as well, so then he looked up my stuff and bought my music online. And now we're actually collaborating and we're doing it totally online because he lives in Brisbane and I'm here in Sydney. So there's lots of possibilities in this lovely, exciting world.

NEW SPEAKER: OK, thank you.

We've been in Australia for three years. It started in the UK 10 years ago. I was living in the UK at the time. We started on the Gold Coast, where I'm based, three years ago. We've now got 93 events every single Saturday morning around the country. Last Saturday, we had almost 12,000 people participate across those 93 events. We're probably the largest sporting organisation in the country. I don't know that for sure, but I'll say it.

(LAUGHTER)

We're pretty big. That's where we are on the face of things. What makes parkrun successful behind the scenes is that we're a digital platform. That is built out of the UK. That platform that has been developed over 10 years enables us to scale what we do from one event – I think our first event was 10 years ago, we only had one event up until about 2007. We've now got almost 500 events around the world, effectively using the same digital platforms – obviously it develops as we grow, but I can launch a new event in Australia on any given weekend using exactly the same platform, same systems, and our procedures are very simple. We're now in 11 countries around the world. We all use the same systems. On a Saturday morning, my event teams – who are all volunteers – run their events, then they log in, upload all the times of all the runners. All the runners get an email. It tells them how they did, compares their time with statistics from previous runs at parkrun. We've got every single run ever recorded right back to event number one. So we're probably one of the most stats-heavy sporting organisations in the world. Far more than, as an example, Athletics Australia, who you might compare us to, because we run. They don't have a great deal of data, whereas we're extremely data-rich. That's not Athletics Australia's fault, it's just we've grown up as a data organisation. I could talk all day, but I won't. But that what parkrun is today. I'm happy to be here, and looking forward to the discussion.

NEW SPEAKER: Interesting debate. You've grown up with electricity. Wouldn't Athletics Australia be so happen a to get 35 years of data. Were you on 6 the other day?

NEW SPEAKER: Possibly. Somebody mentioned it the other day. It might have been an old recording. Possibly!

NEW SPEAKER: Our next read host is Debbie. She's started up special schools and has been involved in project management issues. You can read all that. Debbie, I will just introduce you now.

DEBBIE LITTLEHALES: Thank you very much. Good afternoon, everyone. It's lovely to be here. My name's Debbie. I am based on the south coast of NSW, in Kiama. Over the past 2.5 years, I've been manager of the NBN Digital Enterprise Program. This is a program that was launched – I guess the basic aim of it is to engage small business and not-for-profits in neutralising the NBN. In the town of Kiama, where we're based, interestingly, the NBN was first rolled out in the residential area of town. When the project started, along with the NBN, it was actually the residential area that had the NBN throughout the whole of our project. Really, the project has swung around to being more of an awareness campaign rather than, necessarily, signing people up to the NBN, which is sort of what, I guess, ultimately the aim was. Kiama's a small town. We have 994 registered businesses. The majority of these are accommodation and food services. We're a very tourist-based town. Within the enterprise program, our deliverables work to deliver one-to-one training to 240 small businesses and 60 group sessions over the period of 2.5 years. The take-up was absolutely unbelievable. We really, to start with, thought we would have to really sell our one-to-one program hard. We actually utilised

half of our places in the first six months of being in operation. We actually had to stop a year out from finishing the program because we didn't have any more funded places left.

So a community that is largely small- and micro-businesses grabbed onto this program and got some significant benefits. I thought today I might grab what I saw were probably the six key indicators for success for the project. One is the program was very, very flexible. The Department of Communication has been managing it since the change of government. We were really allowed the respect of being able to adapt the program as was necessary for our community. So they recognised that we were the ones, locally, that knew the small businesses and knew how it worked. So for example, Kiama – don't expect anyone to appear for any kind of training between November and February. It's where everyone's making their money. If you're in the tourist industry, you're working flat-out. If you're not in the tourist industry, you're resting from the rest of the year. The first year that we went to submit stats, we had no delivery at all in November, December, January, February. They eventually trusted us to roll it out. From that perspective, our flexibility was really valuable.

The program focused heavily on individual one-to-one training, which was really, really great. A lot of these small business owners are older people, people who have maybe taken semi-retirement. Sometimes you don't always want to admit to some of these hard challenges you're not totally au fait with. The one-to-one program just exploded. We made sure that we fit that into the group program as well, so there were multiple entry points for people to develop their skills further. We tried very hard to recognise that it's not only – I've got to get this right – it's not only that you need to know what you don't know, but it's also very important that small business owners were treated with the respect of not knowing what they didn't know. So we ran some – what we termed "inspiration sessions". We were really focusing on strategy, things that were maybe way out of the box right now, but you could often see the light bulbs going on for people that "Maybe this isn't what I can do right now, but in the future with a little bit of work, maybe this could transform my business." Ran a great session in wine tasting that we did over a Web conference from Cassella's Wines in Griffith. Absolutely fantastic session. From that, I know at least five businesses that started doing their own Web conference and webinars to develop their own sales. That was really great. We looked heavily into networks – either developing or existing networks. Not only working with people like the Chambers of Commerce, but we recognise, for example, we have a lot of tradies. They really like to work together. We had a lot of sessions specifically about getting your business online for tradies, for artists, for sporting groups. By bringing people with the same industry background together, we got some real traction with that, which is really great. It also led to the developing of networks. I had no idea we had such a wide wedding infrastructure. Astounded me. But we've got celebrants and photographers and florists and caterers that all are in the wedding industry that gradually developed their own network, and we've developed some really great little groups that are still communicating with each other through that.

We help businesses to understand that they didn't need to know everything. Just like they don't do their own plumbing and they don't do their own electrical work and now, less and less people are doing their own desktop publishing. Those who didn't need to manage their own social media and build their own websites – there are professionals out there that do that. That was a light bulb for a lot of businesses as well – they could build in that expertise. Finally, I think with our particular program, what worked really well – we were very, very clear that, with their one-to-one sessions that we were hosting, they weren't going to be sold to. Our consultants – all website developers or social media consultants. We paid them well for their time, and insisted that they didn't on-sell their services. We were very clear to both the client and the deliverer that this was really important. They didn't feel that they were going to come out with a time-share or a set of steak knives or whatever else comes with a free program. Feedback I've had from people later had as indicated that was a really strong engager for them with our project. I've probably gone way over my five minutes. I apologise.

(LAUGHS)

I'll sign off there. Thank you.

(APPLAUSE)

NEW SPEAKER: Thank you very much. Weddings are big down in Kiama?

NEW SPEAKER: Huge!

NEW SPEAKER: Amazing. What about divorces?

(LAUGHTER)

NEW SPEAKER: Haven't spotted the industry.

NEW SPEAKER: Great place! Obviously there is the place to go and get married. I love it. The interesting thing – it's really interesting, what you're talking about, the one-to-one. Then you talk about the groups of people that come together – the tradespeople and what have you. That's how we get to small business people. We get to one of them, or find out who they're talking to, and how you get to them. And the tradespeople come together and talk trade stuff, and then if they're interested, they'll come and talk about that. Again, that about us being people and about talking to us. The other thing you talked about is they don't need to know everything. There's one thing I've spent 4-5 years at the moment – going around saying that so many people go with small business and they'll say, "You need to become better at finances." Then they walk out the door and someone comes in and says, "You need to become better at recruiting." They walk out. Someone else comes in. "You need to become better at sacking people." They rattle it all off. You say, "Nobody can become better than that." I always laugh about sacking and hiring people. It's awful, in small business – you're looking at them in the eye. You've got to get better at that. I always laugh that banks and public servants are always good at recruiting and sacking, aren't they? They always get that right.

(LAUGHTER)

One of the things that annoys me. Thank you for bringing that up. Of course one person can't know everything. That's why we have other businesses and experts offering their services to us. Will Irving – I'll say it. The service we get out of Telstra has improved. I don't care what anybody says. A lot of our members say that to me, by the way. It's improved to the point where, "I'm happy. Can I hang up now? I'm happy." I think Will has been one of the people behind that change in Telstra understanding people, rather than processes. You can read everything else he's done there – there's a lot of stuff. Thanks, Will.

NEW SPEAKER: Thanks, Peter. We are working very hard. I still think we have an awful lot to do. You can email me directly at Telstra.com, and I will get it and something will happen.

NEW SPEAKER: Just sent me a nice little text message during this talk, actually, about the latest iOS software coming through. Well done.

WILL IRVING: We are trying very hard, but we don't always get it right. There you go.

I want to put small business in context for the communications industry, and then pick up on the themes that Leonie, Debbie and Peter have spoken about so far, in terms of what are some of the enablers and some of the challenges that small and medium business has.

I head Telstra Business, the division of Telstra that makes up nearly 20% of Telstra's revenues. We have 1.1 million small- and medium-enterprise customers. There are figures on the back saying 2.4 million small businesses. If you look at those that are full-time, operating businesses, rather than the hobbies and part-times, we think they're about 1.4 million to 1.5 million businesses in Australia that really operate – not subcontractors and not super funds that are run by a company, but the kind of business you'd think of. We think we have, on a really good day, 60-plus per cent of the market, which means it's a very vibrant industry. There is a lot of choice for consumers and for small businesspeople. What's interesting about that 1.1 million is that it is such a diverse group of people. As Peter says, it's a group of people, at the end of the day. But there are five million-plus Australians who work in small business. As I think about our customer base, it's not just those "businesses" as a separate entity, if you like – it really is about 5 million people. If you work in a small business, you know exactly what's going on with everyone else. As Peter says, it's a personal thing. If there is any issue with the business's phone system or its online presence, then everyone in the business knows about it. And all your customers know about it too. Hence that level of responsibility that we carry. It is the engine room of growth and innovation in the economy as well. As Telstra, in the last few years, has started investing in innovation and start-ups, they are – this customer base is typically aware of

where those investments are going. They're not going into companies already in the ASX top few hundred. It's coming to people with the new ideas, running new business models. Typically, as we tend to say, they're digital natives – exactly as Tim described, they can't imagine a world where everything wasn't just done online to begin with. What are some of the big opportunities and the big challenges for those groups? As has already been stated, it's really about doing what is the next logical step for that particular business at that point in time. Peter's example of someone walking in and saying, "You should be in the cloud" is a good one. I often say to people, "Are you in the cloud?" They say, "I know I should be, but not really." I say, "Do you have an iPhone? Do you have a Samsung? Do you use apps? Have you ever had an experience where you've been on a plane and put it in flight mode and the app doesn't work?" "Oh, yeah, that happens." "Then you're in the cloud. That app is a cloud app. It's using connectivity to operate." You can take it into a small-business context asking where your data is being hosted, if the website is sitting in the server in the back room or on someone else's infrastructure. Fundamentally, it's about using the power of networks – be they fixed networks or mobile – to enable you to scale the business, to enable you to have redundancy in the business. If, as a lot of businesses found in Queensland a few years ago, you suddenly have a flood and all your customer data is sitting on your server, and suddenly there's water through it, what do you do? The cloud gives you redundancy. It doesn't matter if it's Telstra or anyone else's – I'm not here for a sales pitch. It's what this industry is doing to enable the power of productivity for small and medium businesses. Yes, there are a range of issues and concerns about data protection which are absolutely critical. But in most cases, it's really interesting as I talk to different small businesses. If you're not in the cloud or not storing data off site, what's the reason? Interestingly, you get given exactly the same reasons, typically – security. For those who've gone to the cloud, "It's a lot safer having my data protect would the hundreds of security people that any of the big players have protecting the data from all sorts of nasty things and people out there..."

I'd much rather than do that than having it sit in the back of the shop, where I get burgled or something happens and I lose my data, or the server crashes and I've only got one of them, and that's it – the hard drive's melted and my data's gone." I also get the same given – I'd much rather have it where I can see it – a green light flashing on the box – than up in the cloud somewhere, because I'm worried for exactly the same reason. This really is about a personal journey. We know what the data tends to say about where relative safety is. And why governments don't run servers in the back of every individual government department for a good reason – why do we have redundancy? Why do banks do the same thing? But there a real education process to be gone through. At its most important, though, what this revolution is doing is changing the way that business needs to think about what adds value. Peter's comment – can you be good at everything as a small business person? The absolutely is absolutely, no. By the way, as a big business, you can't be good at everything either. Telstra has tens of thousands of suppliers for exactly the same reason. It's about saying to any particular businessperson, what matters most to you at this point in time? As I look at our small-customer base, they fit broadly into three categories. About a quarter really care about growing their business quickly. They're very entrepreneurial, often thinking about when they'll start their next business, with their fingers in a range of pies. Around half are there for lifestyle or historical reasons – it's a family business, they like living in the place where they, and therefore the opportunity has come up for working in the public service to working on their own – I'll use Peter as an example. And that's flexible – whether it's for kids, sporting interests, or being in a community. That's about half, the biggest group. Then there's about a quarter who just love being florists or potters or making cheese or being financial advisors or whatever it might be. The sort of people who've said, "You know what? I'm going to lose money on that job, but it's the job that had to be done." I had that comment from an architect the other day. It's just a passion.

If you think about cloud as you think about online, if you think about the stats up behind, you see why 22% are saying, "Don't you think I need a Web presence?" For them, that's not what matters today. There are so many things from a mobility point of view, from how they run their own internal business in terms of their staff being able to share information, so that all the tablets in the business – there might only be three of you, but all of them have got all the data that you need for that project all at the same time. Gone is the tyranny of trying to email, then discovering that there's a mailbox issue or a size limit on the attachments – everything's shared in the business. That's our big focus in small and medium business at Telstra – how do we help customers make the right decisions at the right point in time?

We have nearly 90 business centres around the country dedicated to small business to help people to do that. We work with hundreds of small- and medium-sized IT companies, as our partners in everything from Kiama through to the big end of the CBDs – helping organisations in whatever way suits them best. At the end of the day, it's not about us dictating to customers, it's about them choosing. Finally, on to the education piece – there are a range of programs running different state governments, Chambers of Commerce, different industry groups – say, for example, we've just launched with CPA Australia. A guide to cloud, which is pitched at small business really, from the point of view of the conversations, meaning small businesses with their accountants. There are many ways to get information, and different people will choose different ways to get with it, and our view is to get it to as many people as possible, as easily as possible.

NEW SPEAKER: Thank you very much, Peter.

(APPLAUSE)

NEW SPEAKER: It's interesting that Will was talking about the server. I always got into trouble for not backing up often enough. What a pain! Backing up was such a pain, when you've got so many things happening around you. The cloud, good in, is the logical way to go. There's a thing called standard business reporting. I would guess nobody here would have heard of it? Anybody heard of. IBR? Of course YOU would have heard of it! Just so you know – the same is that all the software providers will make their software standard business reporting compatible – it's all about language. I won't go into it because I don't understand it. It means I'll be able to launch my BAS from my software. I'll be able to send Centrelink information from my software when they ask me about someone who used to work there. Tax file numbers, when the Australian Bureau of Statistics – boy, aren't they behind the times! There's nobody leer from ABS?

(LAUGHTER)

You can send it from your software. It will take a few years for everybody to get up to speed with that, but that's going to be a huge saving for small business, but also for government, once we get there. Also, it opens up a few issues around privacy, but they're never going to go away. There's a lot of good things happening there as well. Another little thing about what COSBOA does – we leave a lot of these sorts of things to our industry organisations. They work with small businesses – we're the lobby group to change the way we're treated at times. I know down at Kiama, I think about a year ago – I can't think where they are but, as you go into Kiama, there's a fish-and-chip shop and a couple of little shops – they're quite good. Coles, I think, was building a new shop somewhere. One day, those business owners got up and realised the car parks out the front of their shops had been closed. Which meant, "You will close." Anyway, that got overruled by the local government. They're the sort of things in the background. I've got to mention this, because in the background, they're the sort of things that destroy you. You can gauge all you want, but you wake up one day and the car park isn't there that people need to go to your shop. There's a lot of background happening around the small business area, not just around this area. It's our job to make sure that if someone embraces technology, the other barriers are removed, or at least they're aware of them, so they won't waste their money or feel "Why am I doing this if someone's going to move a car park because Coles controls everything?" I think we'll move onto questions now. I imagine you've all been thinking of questions you'd like to ask. Has anybody got a question they'd like to us? I've got a few here already. If there's anything you'd like to ask the panel about small business, what we're doing, how to get us engaged, stories you've got of people you've seen do it well, struggle with it...

One of the things I'm really interested in is what we do to promote programs out to small business, 'cause there's some good stuff around this. We know with ACCAN and others – what we launched today, it's sitting there. How do we get that out to small-business people? Any panel members got any ideas? You could sing a song about it?

NEW SPEAKER: (LAUGHS) I'll put it on YouTube for you.

NEW SPEAKER: Different people pick up different information from different sources. She mentioned tradies as an example, Debbie. We worked with Trading Pad. A plumber set up his own tablet a couple of years ago. He went around, spent some time thinking about which apps, and then a few of his friends who are plumbers looked at what he was doing, and said, "You set one of those up for

me?" He's now got 15 staff – someone else is running the plumbing business, and he's running a plumbing business doing apps purely for plumbers. I'll sure sooner or later he'll branch out into a number of other nearby trades. It's a great example of often it's not the technology that's at the core, it's how you use it. Once a pawn a time, most of us could know how a car battery worked – 30-odd years ago. Today, any of us got the faintest clue? Nope, you need an IT degree to know what a car engine does. You don't necessarily need to know how it works underneath – it's how you use the tool that's the powerful thing. There are very different sources for that. It's interesting to me – word of mouth is still the biggest single factor. Somebody else using something, and then someone hears about it – often through quite random sort of roots – and then once you get that first level of interest, then it's the going online and it's the things like the ACCAN publications and website. Something's sparked interest. Now I want to do some research. That's where I think these programs kick in. Once you get people over that threshold, it's quite easy. The hard part is what you don't know you don't know – that's the hard bit: Any comments from the panel?

NEW SPEAKER: That word-of-mouth comment is quite pertinent, I think. Especially for me – part of what I do is crowdfunding for my recordings. When you've got a potential global audience, you need a lot of word of mouth to get your stuff out there. But word of mouth, nowadays, is not just people talking to their mate down the road – it's people tweeting about it and connecting with the other people that they've got online – their friends online or people that just happen to be following them online. That's how information can really spread nowadays.

In the early days of the internet, websites cost a fortune. Let's talk about negative word of mouth. "I spent 20 grand on a website and it's done nothing for me." We're going back 15 years or whatever. We've got this issue around, "I'm a social media expert." I'm of the opinion there's no such thing – it changes so quickly tomorrow, that I'm not an expert – there are people who know what they're talking about. I know some, and they're very good. But gee, some people out there have no idea what they're talking about: How do you confront that? What do you do when people say they're going to do something but they can't? Any ideas on dealing with that one?

NEW SPEAKER: I'm a member of several women-in-business groups. I also ran a social media company for a couple of years, my own company. I was training mostly women in business. Women in business are really connecting in some interesting ways in physical groups. There's loads of them up on the northern beaches where I come from, and I know they're all over Australia now. One of the things we do in our women-in-business groups is get experts to talk to the women about various aspects that they might need for their small business. That's how I found out about the small business group that I belong to. They're also avid users of social media. They have set up Facebook groups, for instance, where they talk about things. Women are fantastic at networking. So I think, if you were going to offer courses to small business, and you wanted to get to women in small business, get into their networking groups, because they're growing massively, all over the place. One group I belong to is called "inspiring women". She started off with one group on the northern beaches and, I think she's got five groups all over Australia now.

PETER STRONG: Great, thank you. Any questions from the audience, please? Thank you. Over here?

NEW SPEAKER: Hi. Tegan from Infoxchange again. Just wondering – someone on the panel was talking about the "don't know, don't know" curve. It would be great to hear anecdotes or stories you guys had about how to address and how to engage those small businesses that are very determined to not engage? That would be great.

WILL IRVING: If I had an answer for that, I'd love to share it!

(LAUGHTER)

It's interesting. It's a real challenge. You look at some of the statistics out of the census business report – 22% never think they'll need a website. And a chunk of those may never. There's still about 1 in 4 small businesses that send a fax at least once a week. In big business – I asked a room of "big business people" the other when was the last time anybody used a fax – nobody could remember. There is a different adoption rate of technology. Those people are not the ones on Facebook. In fact, Facebook is the enemy for all sorts of odd reasons. I think it's really about finding the things which do

matter to people. I mentioned those different groups – that group that is very passionate about what they do. If you walk in and say, "This is about growing your business..." "But I don't want to grow my business." They're happy with themselves and one or two staff, if that. If they have to generate another 30% of sales to hire a third or fourth person, that's too much. "I'm just happy. Leave me alone. I don't want to grow sales. Online, I don't care." "Well, do you want to know what's going on with clay and what's happening there?" "Yeah, I'm always interested in different types of clay and the evolution of that." Use it for that. A basic smartphone is not that expensive. Just go and use it as nothing more than a bit of information. Or go down to the library, even. You find those little things that people are interested in, and then one thing leads to another, and a bit like what is happening with – look at my parents in their 70s, who are now – a father who I can't get off his iPad. 10 years ago, "Why would I need one of those things?" Once people start, it just gets comfortable – then you see a take-off. Find the little hook, whatever that may be. But it's not easy, in a lot of cases.

DEBBIE LITTLEHALES: I absolutely would agree. From my perspective, it's finding a solution to a problem, and also normalising – like, people talk about digital business and non-digital business as if they're somehow different. It's just an expansion of business. But when you start talking "digital business" to people, they think we're talking about websites, Facebooks, not realising there's such a wealth of other tools that just solve your problem, be it in communication or expanding markets or some of the other great things that people have discussed that aren't necessarily just about having a website. I think that that's the first response – the website. Then when you can – however you can get people in on a conversation to talk but about some of the other stuff, that's where all the welt is.

PETER STRONG: If I could say, what Will was saying as well, about talking to them about what they want. If I can give the example of a home-based business association – they're very hard to get to. Years ago in Canberra, I'm talking back in the 1990s, they ran a thing on the radio saying, if you want to start a home-based business association, turn up to this particular place. They had 140 people turn up at 8:00 at night, which is extraordinary. Anyway, within a year, the whole association collapsed. You go back and look at it, and you found out that the government, who was helping set it up, said, "We're here to help you grow." And the people didn't want to grow. They just wanted to network because they were lonely at home. There's the use of technology and stuff – to connect these people in the way they want. They would then take it forward. I think there's that – what do they want? What's stopping them doing it? I don't even care what's stopping them doing it. What do they want, and how do we find that through the wonderful things we have in this day and age? Again, it's about looking at what they need and want, not what we want them to do. Questions?

TERESA CORBIN: Peter, I've got one. I think everyone on the panel could answer this in their own way from their own perspective, and Will will have a different perspective, coming from a telco. I'm wondering what telecommunications providers do to assist businesses – you can give examples of how you telco helped provide you. You might even be able to help provide.

LEONIE SMITH: I can start. I found when I was training women in business, for instance, a lot of the problems they had was they were using really old gear, like, I had one problem – she was on XP, she was on a 5-year-old computer, she didn't have ADSL2 because it didn't run up to her house. The guy next door got it and she didn't – she was on ADSL1. Every time we had to load up a web page on her computer, we had to go away, make a cup of tea and come back. It was that slow. And she was running an online business. I think it would have been really helpful if there was somebody from Telstra who could come out and basically have a look at all her gear and help her make it simpler. If you at least got a new computer, things would run a bit quicker. You can't do anything about your internet connection at this stage, but the gear would help. She had no idea where to start. I actually started up a business helping women in small business buy computers and gear. That's my passion and what I love doing. I wonder if there's an opportunity for providers to provide more than just the pipeline out there, and some of that, and some of the handsets and stuff, and giving small business owners a more broad advice around that – just make it simpler. The other thing I'd say about a lot of the providers is it's so – there's too many options. When you go to sign up for an account or whatever, whether it's your telephone account or it's an internet account, there are so many different options, a lot of people just throw their hands up and walk out. They want it to be a lot simpler – like have less options.

HELEN PERRIS: Yeah, paralysed by choice.

PETER STRONG: It comes back to the person selling and understanding the customer and talking the language of the customer. I was thinking of the small businesses owners who sell their businesses. Some don't go very far because they still have a service they want to sell. They don't discover what's wanted. They have a product they want to sell, rather than discovering what the customer, another small businessperson, wants. Businesses are working hard to get their people understanding that. I think small business – sorry, Will, that's just the way it is.

WILL IRVING: That's fine.

HELEN PERRIS: The challenge for me, as an artist, is I want to take what I'm doing to the next level. It's different for musicians at the moment – a lot of live venues are closing down. There are fewer places where you can actually play gigs. A lot of venues aren't taking gambles on up-and-coming artists. So really, where things are going in terms of musicians is livestreaming – just doing concerts from your own house or your own backyard, and then streaming them, putting them up, so that people all over the world can watch you play this concert live. And then you can use that to get more fans or you can get people to subscribe to your streams or whatever. But it can be really different to do that if you don't have a good enough upload speed. That's where I'm really hamstrung at the moment, because the NBN's great, but it doesn't get to my hoooooouse.

(LAUGHTER)

We've got people in my suburb, like a couple of streets away, that have got it, and I don't have it. If we could get that to everyone, then that would make – well, it would make life a lot easier for me, at least, and for a lot of other artists too, I think. There would be a lot more possibilities if we all had that upload speed.

Not just the download speed – it's the upload speed. I think a lot of politicians don't realise that that is what the issue is – it's not about downloading movies and downloading this and that and getting everything for free. It's about artists being able to upload their work into the cloud so that other people can see and hear it. If we don't have it, then we can't do it.

LEONIE SMITH: You were saying earlier about the backups – I'm the backup queen. I've got backups on backups on backups. I'm in iCloud and other service that I use – I backed up my whole computer and it had a lot of files on it. It took three months. I only have 1.5 megabit upload. I just kept it running for three months before it actually backed everything up. The cloud is really great for all of that but, for the average small business owner that's not on proper cable broadband or anything, like lots of the people I know, backing up to the cloud is a massive proposition, and costs a lot of money.

PETER STRONG: That's why COSBOA is here, and will take that message back.

WILL IRVING: There are businesses that have set up in a lot of NBN areas – including one in South Australia. "We've got NBN. We can offer services to businesses close by who don't yet have it to do exactly that. Either bring your laptop or memory sticks in, and we will do it from our place using our fast connection." Again, without getting into – we could spend a lot of time talking about NBN, but one of those early questions was why can't we just use the HFC cable, which covers about 35% of houses, and is both Optus and Telstra? The big limitation is the uplink speed. From a business point of view, they're doing a 1:2 ratio. The cable was built to deliver television, that's why it was put in by both Optus Vision and Foxtel. At least the current standard, typically, is more like 100 down and 400 up. That's changing, and can be changed, but there is quite a different network engineering that's gone into the cable. That's why the overbuild from a business point of view – forget my Telstra hat, I'm wearing a business hat, particularly small business – that's one thing NBN gives you – the upload speed. Subject to when it gets there. Bearing in mind, large corporates have typically already put fibre in already, and governments and schools have fibre across all the metro areas in main cities.

WILL IRVING: It's all a function again. The capacity is the capacity and typically consumers and most businesses today still use more download than upload. It tends to be the large corporates like Google, everyone is going and downloading an awful lot more than they are uploading so typically they are engineering and DSL initially might have been an 8: 1 ratio, an equivalent kind of ratio as you have gone up to ADSL 2 and then VDSL. And again even standard NBN in a consumer context is not a 1: 2 ratio. There are businesses again where you can get business grade today and you can get

symmetrical service but it is a function of what is the value and what do you want to pay for in terms of the service put in. While we are on that topic, I will pick up the comments. Leonie's comments are absolutely right, we've struggled often to provide good advice to people in their premises. Part of the logic of the business centres, and the first ones are three or four years old and we have been opening a few of them recently, has been to try and get that advice more. In the consumer space we have a service called Telstra Platinum and we're, would go on offering that service for business and it's about getting the right advice and the training level needs to be a lot higher. Not the technical training but the able to understand the customer and give good advice as opposed to, you know, there's technically accurate advice about the network engineering and then there's good advice about what is right for your business given how you use it and that is the bit that is a lot harder and we have a lot of work to do still.

PETER STRONG: Another question?

NEW SPEAKER: I'm Will from the University of Wollongong. I'm wondering about the possibilities for the internet to enable small business to develop greater economies of scale. So, by linking up with businesses in other locations and getting some kinds of benefits along those lines – has that been something in your experience that has occurred? Or is it still to be seen or is it an impractical idea?

WILL IRVING: I will jump in quickly. I think we're seeing a lot of it. At its simplistic level if you look at crowdsourcing and you see business making use of that in ways, that has rapidly spreading through some types of small businesses. NBN in Tasmania, which relatively speaking, is more advanced than elsewhere, we're starting to see more businesses who are more geographically dispersed borough all are NBN and it's easier to share information and get the uploads – and also the video issue. The fact that once you can do a quality video which is, you know, easier and not as expensive, then that opens up a whole bunch of levels of trust. As human beings, we see and take in an awful lot more than we just listen to. That's why we're all in the room and not just all dialled in. I think there's huge potential. We are just only at the very, very beginning, but I'm not sure of the experience in Canberra?

DEBBIE LITTLEHALES: I was going to pick on the same. Certainly businesses connecting through web conference technologies really seems to be taking off. The other thing is – it's slightly off tangent a bit, but we just referenced it earlier, in Kiama half the municipality has the NBN in the and just to the south, where I live, it doesn't at least for the next five years. So we see people looking at collaborating in the area of town that has the NBN. So we're seeing hot desks and hot office situations where people can purchase or rent a day on are a month or six months, which I think would be a great opportunity for musos as well to get some shared space. I will hook you up!

(LAUGHTER)

PETER STRONG: Thank you, and good stories there.

NEW SPEAKER: I think we have three business businesses across the world if you want to think about it that way, they are all operating separately throughout the company and we are never face-to-face but through the internet and so on we are able to connect and know what's happening and it's not uncommon for me to get up at 2:00 in the morning with eight different countries around the world and Skype, when they are all awake and I'm not! But to answer your question, yes, it's happening already and it's really revolutionising the way we all work.

LEONIE SMITH: I do quite a few webinars as an educator and the biggest problem I have is with the quality of the internet depending on the program being used. We had to use an Adobe webinar program and it was unbelievably bad because of the delay. So the host of the webinar and myself were talking and there was an about 30 second delay between us so I had to get my Telstra 4G dongle out for the actual webinar after we spent quite a bit of time setting up to do it. So obviously, if all of us who were in that conference – and there might have been 50 people in the webinar – had better internet, you wouldn't have the whole thing lagging and that kind of stuff. For me, it is a juggling act. I've got about three or four different sources of internet backup in case one of them fails, including my hotspot on my phone and my iiNet dongle, a Telstra dongle and my ADSL. So, yes, we would love the NBN also. But I know we're not going to get it for about seven years.

NEW SPEAKER: (Tim). I think that is a common issue you are talking about there. Skype is a classic one where, if Skype was actually any good and the internet connections were any good, none of us would actually use the phone anymore, because it's theoretically free phone calls. But it is just that unreliable, for whatever reason – be it your computer or internet connection or whatever might be the case – that you just can't rely on it all the time. And that's exactly what you are talking about. The number of times that you are trying to talk on Skype and you are like, "Can you hear me? Can you hear me"? I'm sure you have all been there! It's frustrating! The reality is it will be there at some point but just not net.

HELEN PERRIS: I think if people are just getting all that frustration all the time, they throw up their hands in the air and say "I'm not going to bother" and that is a huge brick wall that you have to break down for people so if you didn't have to build the wall in the first place, and it was easy from the start, it just removes so many barriers.

DEBBIE LITTLEHALES: I also work a lot in the webinar space and what I often say to people is you've got to really compare it to a regular meeting – and sometimes stuff goes wrong. We are here all coming here today and we're all planning to be here for 9:00 in the morning but there could be a traffic jam or you may not get a taxi, or the building may be shut down or whatever. So if people normalise the concept a little bit, that it's not magic and it is sometimes going to have a problem and you do have to plan where you are going to go and plan how to get into the building – I really think that normalising the process and being aware that there are problems sort of helps people along a little bit as well.

PETER STRONG: And small business people love case studies about our industry! That's what we need. Especially with it's with our industry association and that's how we learn a lot of the things we're hearing today.

LEONIE SMITH: I was going to comment on that and say the big difference between your scenario and webinars is people know what's going wrong when it is a physical thing. When it is on the internet and they have no idea, that's a really big barrier and you will get people in chat saying "What did she say, missed that? Is there going to be a video afterwards?"

PETER STRONG: We had another question, I think?

NEW SPEAKER: Marcus Wigan. I had a rather practical question. By the way, I really want a copy of that hip-hop exercise – I loved it! I had a very practical one. One of the problems, as I understand it, and I can easily be wrong, is that a fax is a legal document but even an encrypted signed Acrobat file is not yet and certainly when I was running a business recently, it was a barrier and it was a problem. I wonder if it has been fixed? Or I wonder if any of you have been running with that? I know the major government issues now handle major electronic issues and stamps, et cetera, but this hasn't penetrated as far as small businesses yet, or certainly not business-to-business. I had to keep a fax for a long time only for that.

HELEN PERRIS: I have never used a fax! Never.

WILL IRVING: I used to be a lawyer, but not anymore, but certainly in a number of states there were amendments to make electronic documents for all purposes and I think that is now the case in most cases but I'm not giving you advice, I'm just suggesting go and check! No!

(LAUGHTER)

Certainly it has changed a lot. I would be surprised if that is still the case.

PETER STRONG: It is a good point because if I go to two different lawyers and get two different answers – I know that's rare that would happen!

(LAUGHTER)

And I think because there is confusion at the moment and I think that's something the council will go and look at.

WILL IRVING: From the electronic evidence act, and I know for my part it is three years since I was a lawyer so I declare that right now.

PETER STRONG: But you were an award-winning lawyer!

WILL IRVING: I had a bit of a career as one! I think you will find everywhere or almost everywhere that has changed. But don't take that as certain.

At this moment: I know that it hasn't, because it happened to me yesterday! A digital signature issue held me up yesterday, so I don't have an answer and it happens.

WILL IRVING: That may be the bank's policy rather than a legal government evidence issue.

PETER STRONG: But we will – the council will take that up because it is something that is around and we haven't confronted it. As ACCAN looked at that at all, Teresa?

TERESA CORBIN: Narelle has lost her voice which has made the whole session a bit challenging. So, what are you saying? Yes, OK, a note on a mobile is good enough for a will these days. Apparently.

PETER STRONG: There you go.

TERESA CORBIN: We did some work with Melbourne University on digital legacies and they looked at wills and also what happens to people's online presence and material after they die. So, there you go.

PETER STRONG: OK, well we might work with ACCAN and get some facts so we can get it out to people.

TERESA CORBIN: I was going to ask, I think it would be really great to finish the session on a similar vein to what we did with the privacy one this morning, which is, if you could say one thing, what advice would you give to businesses going online? Just to get started? Narelle is yelling down here! Digital ready.com.au.au! That's what Narelle is yelling. But I think it is a question for you guys.

TIM OBERG: I would say, to get the ball rolling, there's no point having a bad Facebook page. Or there's no point having a bad website. Because that will do you more harm than not having one at all. So for any business in the room, if you are going to invest in it, invest in it fully. Make sure that it truly represents who you are and your brand and your business, because nine times out of ten, it's going to be the first thing that people find out about you. If they get a word of mouth referral from a friend, well, you've almost got the deal. You've almost got the sale. But if they go to your Facebook page and it is rubbish, which a lot are, then you are probably not going to get it. So don't have it. Don't have a Facebook page if you are not going to maintain it and make it look good and make it represent who you are. And likewise with your website, don't have a \$100 website because it won't do you justice. There you go, that's my tip!

HELEN PERRIS: I had something and now it has gone. Come back to me!

TIM OBERG: Was it about music for a website!

DEBBIE LITTLEHALES: I would say, have a strategy. Don't just patch together, oh this looks interesting, that is kind of cool, let's do that – I would say have a long-term strategy similar to your business plan or your marketing plan or whatever other plan, that it is actually formed over – it is informed by what you need to do and it's something that you invest in and you stick to, rather than just patching together new toys.

HELEN PERRIS: I know what it was – don't be afraid to use your networks to ask for help. Don't think you need to do this all on your own. There are a lot of people out there willing to help you. Some for free and some for exchange of services. Bartering is great, folks! There are a lot of people out there,

so check your networks first to see if there's anyone there that can help you do something that you are having trouble with.

PETER STRONG: Thank you.

LEONIE SMITH: I agree with all of that and I would say that as a long-time user of the internet, don't underestimate the power of it. I have got incredible opportunities from simply having a website and a blog and I have been doing it for a long time so I'm actually very good at it – I'm good at it. But my recent business has just gone through the roof over three years, and most of my business comes from Google search – simply people – I got a 60 minute interview early in my career simply because the journalist Googled "Cyber-safety educator or expert" in Sydney and because I had geared up my website to work I got that interview and that led to a whole lot of different things. So don't underestimate it but definitely get education on it, as everybody else is saying. You've got to do it right and learn how to do it. I know a lot of small business owners are really – they are a little bit resentful of having to learn all of this new stuff because they might be absolute experts in their field now and it feels a bit like they are going back to primary school to learn all of this new stuff and they feel a bit out of their element. So wherever you can find some really good training, do that. And to have a go at everything but don't try and do everything at once. Get good at one thing, maybe get a Facebook page going and working before you start on Twitter, or Pinterest, or some other thing and take it step by step.

WILL IRVING: I was going to jokingly say "Find yourself a teenager"! In all seriousness, if this is for people who haven't really started, think about the two or three things that bug you every day. And that might be needing to drive sales, it might be how your team works together, it might be the fact that you can't do things in a particular location or while you are on the move or what have you. Then have a think about either your supplier base or your customer base. Again, a lot of small businesses supply other businesses, so they are B 2 B rather than B 2 C. And go and talk to some people who you see are doing things and think "Why do they do that"? And think about that process of what other people are doing. And these are not the people on Facebook, but do that first and pick one of those needs when you find someone who seems to have a similar need and is doing something to solve it that you haven't yet done. That will then lead to the bigger thinking and ultimately the strategy that I think I mentioned before. Otherwise, I think the danger is if you start trying to do everything all at once, the reality is nothing happens and you will be back in six months' time.

PETER STRONG: Great. I agree with you will all of that, by the way. I know watching people who do it they find out someone who is doing it well and go and ask them. Normally we are happy to share, it's rare we are not happy to share. That's how you find out. If someone comes along and say "You need to" then don't listen to anything else and move on. Because they probably don't know until they talk to you and ask you questions and let you make the decisions, rather than telling you what you need to do. We will finish off now with a video.

TERESA CORBIN: Hang on, I have a couple of things to say.

PETER STRONG: OK.

TERESA CORBIN: I will just jump in here quickly because I wanted to point out that Helen and Tim are both case studies in our digital ready materials that are online and I wanted to thank them for being part of the launch and also for doing those videos because they are actually really interesting. So please do go and have a look at their case studies because, as Peter said, case studies are a great way to learn.

Also I wanted to point out that, before we started this work, we actually had a look at what was out there for businesses of this type and to see who was actually engaging with the digital economy, and we found that only four out of ten were actively using digital online services to assist them with their businesses and their not-for-profit organisations in this space. Which was actually quite surprising – we thought it would be higher. So these materials are really specifically targeting the basics that are necessary to simply get online and to actually help you in the area that you want to be helped, rather than exactly what Peter says – telling you how – telling you exactly how to do everything all at the same time, but just actually targeting what you specifically want to or need to know. In a particular area like teleworking or Cloud, or social media, as three such examples. And this project is actually

going to be rolling out over the next three years, so this is just the first tranche of information and materials that we're out there and we will be tracking the business statistics that we collected a little while back to see whether they actually improve over that time and see whether, in fact, our training materials are hitting the mark, because that is a big issue that I think has been raised in the conversations with all of our small businesses so far, is that a lot of training materials don't hit the mark and there's a lot of money wasted out there. So hopefully our digital ready package of materials is going to be more successful than other things that have been out there. The digital ready is part of a series of other grants that are being run by other organisations called the Digital Business Kits that are being managed through the Department of Communications. I know we have a representative here today who is overseeing that grant program. So you will probably see other launches. There has already been a couple but I'm sure there's some more to come and you will see more materials and more activity in this space. Before I finish, I just wanted to acknowledge the enormous hard work that has been done by Alan, who has led the project, up the front here.

(APPLAUSE)

Narelle, Brad, Rich, Kelly and a lot of other people at the ACCAN team that have really pitched in to get the work done. And Eileen. I didn't want to highlight her by name! This is Eileen at the front here, from the departments. Also I wanted to highlight another swag of materials that we have been doing over the last two years that Allen kicked off when he was first our project officer in a small business, but Kelly has been progressing as our current small business project officer and that is a bunch of tip sheets for small businesses on Cloud, on business continuity, on choosing your provider – those sorts of things, as well. Now we'll finish off with the video, and in ten minutes' time we will come back for the very exciting inaugural accessible app challenge awards ceremony. So we will take a ten minute break after this video and then convene back in here before we go to have some drinks. So thank you very much, everybody.

(APPLAUSE)

We drive trucks and we make coffee
We sell books and we sell shoes
We build things and we make things
And we fix them for you too
We use our skills to give advice
We make you healthy, wealthy and wise
The small guys you can count on
We're always here for you
We give our towns and cities
The culture that they love
We greet you with a smile
When you walk into our shop
The self-employed community
We are this nation's family
We'll photograph your wedding
We'll even wash your dog
'Cause we don't shy away
From working every day
We're Australian small business
Yeah, we will lead the way
No, we don't shy away
From working every day
We're Australian small business
Yeah, we will lead the way
Early mornings every day
We're staying up till late
We open up our doors for
The joy that we create
And we don't want to wait
We're living life our way
We do it 'cause we love it, yeah

Each and every day
So let's let the world know
Our passion's not for show
We're putting it all on the line
To help the nation grow
'Cause we don't shy away
From working every day
We're Australian small business
Yeah, we will lead the way
And we don't shy away
From working every day
We're Australian small business
Yeah, we will lead the way
We're Australian small business
Yeah, we will lead the way
Yeah, we're Australian small business
And we will lead the way

(APPLAUSE)
