



POLICY BLUEPRINT 2025:

Thriving Retail for a Prosperous Australia

Retail performance affects every Australian. The retail sector is a cornerstone of the national economy, contributing more than \$430 billion annually and making up almost one fifth (18%) of our Gross Domestic Product. Our sector is Australia's largest private sector employer, employing over 1.4 million Australians and offering many Australians their first job. The retail community serves millions of Australians every day, with retail stores and retail workers making a profound contribution to the health and vitality of local communities. Small to medium size businesses and family operators make up the majority of our sector.

As the next federal election approaches, it is vital policymakers recognise the retail sector's role in fostering economic growth, employment, and community wellbeing. Government plays a key role in ensuring fair competition, stimulating investment, and fostering a business environment that supports retailers in managing costs for Australian households. A policy framework that boosts business confidence, enhances productivity, and supports investment in workforce and innovation is essential. By reducing complexity, supporting job creation, and maintaining a fair, competitive environment, government and industry can ensure the retail sector remains a strong, vibrant, and growing pillar of the economy.

The Australian Retailers Association (ARA) and the National Retail Association (NRA) present this election platform as a roadmap for strengthening the retail sector. Built on the foundations of extensive input from our retail members, it outlines key priorities to drive growth, improve workforce participation, and build a sustainable, resilient industry. We call on all political leaders to commit to reforms that support the future of Australian retail and the millions of workers, businesses and communities that depend on its success.

A Call for Action

The next Federal Government must take decisive action to support the retail sector and ensure its continued contribution to Australia's economic and social well-being.

- ✓ Reduce regulatory complexity
- ✓ Support business investment and growth
- ✓ Drive productivity through technology and skills development

Retailers are ready to invest, grow, and innovate – but we need government collaboration to ensure a resilient, competitive, and future-ready sector.

For more information, scan the QR code.





EMBRACE A GROWTH MINDSET

A thriving retail sector requires policies that restore business confidence, enhance productivity, and reduce unnecessary complexity.

Federal Leadership to Enable National Harmonisation

- Establish a Federation Commission and National Reform Fund that incentivises regulatory harmonisation across State, Territory and Federal jurisdictions.
- Align payroll tax thresholds and reduce administrative complexity for multi-state retailers.
- Standardise environmental regulations, including waste, recycling, and packaging requirements.
- Support retail crime initiatives across States and Territories, including the introduction of Workplace Protection Orders and support for increased business surveillance and deterrence. Include a coordinated law enforcement response, led at a national level.
- Streamline trading hours, workers' compensation, freight and transport laws to reduce compliance burdens and costs.

Grow Small, Medium and Family-Owned Businesses

- Expand small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) tax rate eligibility by raising the threshold from \$50M to \$250M.
- Make the Instant Asset Write-Off (IAW) permanent and increase the threshold to \$50,000.
- Continue to provide energy relief subsidies and grants to help small businesses reduce electricity costs and invest in energy efficiency initiatives.
- Strengthen SME financing and dispute resolution mechanisms to support business stability.

Increase Australia's Productivity Performance

- Appoint a Minister for Productivity to lead a national red-tape reduction taskforce.
- Develop a national AI strategy to facilitate adoption of AI and boost productivity while addressing concerns around privacy and trust.
- Expand access to technology adoption grants for AI-powered retail innovations.
- Ensure retail is included in national productivity funding programs to drive efficiency in the sector.
- Invest in affordable, reliable low-emissions energy solutions, reducing the impact of electricity pricing on the cost of doing business.

Enable Healthy Competition

- Ensure a level playing field for off-shore international e-commerce retailers through policy solutions that strengthen compliance with existing regulations.
- Strengthen consumer product safety enforcement of existing standards for overseas e-commerce retailers.
- Phased reduction on the corporate tax to improve international competitiveness and encourage investment.



GROW THE RETAIL WORKFORCE

Retail is Australia's largest private-sector employer, however faces challenges relating to labour shortages, skills gaps, and regulatory barriers limiting growth.

Addressing Labour Shortages & Workforce Growth

- Adjust migration policy to better balance retail workforce needs and skills shortages.
- Expand Core Skills Occupation List (CSOL) eligibility for key retail roles.
- Strengthen industry-led initiatives to support women, First Nations Australians, and people with disabilities in retail careers.

Support Upskilling to Future-Proof the Workforce

- Expand Free TAFE into a Free VET program, covering all qualified training providers.
- Reinstate Certificate III & IV employer incentives for trainees and apprentices.
- Increase funding for retail-specific digital, supply chain, and AI training programs.

Focus Workplace Reforms on Flexibility & Productivity

- Ensure industrial relations (IR) reforms support flexibility for employees and employers and business growth.
- Align wage growth with productivity improvements to manage cost pressures.

Unlock Economic and Social Gains Through Workforce Inclusion

- Close the superannuation gender gap by supporting career credits for returning workers.
- Expand First Nations employment initiatives through industry-led training and leadership programs.
- Improve access to retail jobs for people with disabilities through workplace support and training incentives.



COLLABORATE ON COMMUNITY OUTCOMES

Retailers are committed to sustainability, security, and fair competition but need government collaboration to achieve meaningful outcomes.

Prioritise Retail Worker Safety & Reduce Retail Crime

- Establish a federal leadership position on Organised Retail Crime by developing a coordinated national strategy that includes a targeted approach to tackling organised criminal syndicates, addresses the root causes of theft, and implementing intervention strategies to prevent crime escalation.
- Strengthen intelligence-sharing mechanisms between police, retailers, and government agencies to track criminal networks operating across multiple jurisdictions.
- Support existing retail crime reporting mechanisms, and coordinate a national campaign to educate businesses on mitigating retail crime.
- Coordinate a review of National Privacy Laws to increase business ability to monitor, increase surveillance, and implement technology as an effective method to deter retail crime.

Partner with Industry for a Circular Economy

- Implement a national packaging and waste strategy to streamline compliance and reduce costs, and to harmonise single-use plastic bans.
- Expand recycling infrastructure and invest in local processing facilities and end market systems.
- Incentivise food donation programs through tax offsets for surplus food donations.
- Support research & development (R&D) tax incentives for sustainable retail solutions.

Partner with Industry on Health and Nutrition Policy

- Work with industry to support the National Obesity Strategy and support businesses to provide more food and beverage products to consumers.
- Collaborate with industry and community stakeholders to harmonise food classification systems and support education initiatives that promote healthier consumer choices.
- Maintain the AANA Code as the industry standard to support public health outcomes.

Continue the Transition to a Low-Carbon Economy

- Provide grants for energy-efficient retail upgrades (e.g. LED lighting, solar, storage).
- Expand EV charging and freight decarbonisation incentives to lower logistics emissions.

Enhance Supply Chain Resilience

- Streamline freight and transport regulations to cut inefficiencies and costs.
- Invest in logistics infrastructure to improve supply chain capacity to improve supply chain capacity, including investing in the M7 upgrade between Townsville and Cairns.
- Prioritise working with industry to build on existing infrastructure in Northern Australia, to adequately supply and provide food and beverage products, goods and services.