

FEDERAL ELECTION PRIORITIES

Australian retail: driving economic growth, creating jobs and supporting communities



Australia's \$430 billion retail sector is a cornerstone of our economy, contributing 18% of the nation's Gross Domestic Product. It's the largest private sector employer in the country, employing one in ten Australians, and is dominated by small to medium-sized businesses – many family-owned. Retailers play a vital role in connecting communities, providing essential services, and reinvesting billions of dollars back into local economies. They are the country's biggest buyers of local produce, are major taxpayers, and are strong supporters of local communities, both in good times and bad.

When retail prospers, the whole economy benefits. Over the past five years, retailers have faced significant challenges—slowed consumer spending, rising business costs, labor shortages, a retail crime wave and supply chain disruptions.

Despite these hurdles, Australian retailers have shown great resilience. Now, the sector is primed for growth and is eager to collaborate with the next federal government to unlock its full potential and drive broader economic success.

INDUSTRY SNAPSHOT



1.4m

Australians work in retail

Source: ABS



56%

female retail workforce

Source: ABS



28,700

vacancies across the retail sector

Source: ABS



\$430b

value of retail economy

Source: ABS



16.8%

online share of retail spend in 2023

Source: Australia Post



84.3%

Consumer Confidence
+1.3pts from Sep 24

Source: Roy Morgan

OUR TOP PRIORITIES

With extensive input from the retail community, we have identified the top priorities ahead of the federal election. These are:



EMBRACE A GROWTH MINDSET

Given the important role that the retail sector plays in driving economic growth, we seek policies that:

- Increase consumer confidence and disposable income;
- Recognise the economic impact of the retail sector;
- Restore business confidence, particularly for small business;
- Apply downward pressure on business costs; and
- Reduce complexity by driving national alignment on state matters.



GROW THE RETAIL WORKFORCE

To create more jobs and strengthen our position as Australia's largest private sector employer, we seek policies that:

- Drive productivity through a flexible workplace relations system;
- Support tripartate efforts to provide safe and inclusive workplaces;
- Connect people from diverse backgrounds with retail jobs;
- Co-invest in vocational training to upskill our sector; and
- Address residual vacancies and skills gaps through migration.



COLLABORATE ON COMMUNITY OUTCOMES

To create a more resilient, sustainable and future-focused sector, we need to partner with government on policies that:

- Reduce instances of retail crime, with a focus on organised crime syndicates;
- Navigate cyber security and the responsible use of technology and artificial intelligence;
- Accelerate our transition to the low-carbon, circular economy;
- Improve resilience of the local and global supply chain; and
- Drive investment in community infrastructure and housing.

WHO WE ARE

The Australian Retailers Association (ARA) and National Retail Association (NRA) are the industry bodies that represent Australia's vibrant and diverse retail sector. This includes large international and national retailers, as well as the small and medium sized businesses that make up 95% of the ARA's and NRA's membership. Our members operate stores and online shops nationwide - from food and fashion to hardware and hairdressing.