



16th February 2026

Committee Secretary
Parliamentary Joint Committee on Corporations and Financial Services
Department of the Senate
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Madam/Sir

Submission to inquiry into small business insurance

Outdoors Queensland is the peak body for the outdoor sector in Queensland. We represent outdoor organisations and individuals in Queensland, consisting of a range of outdoor industry stakeholders, covering the five broad pillars of outdoor activities:

- outdoor recreation,
- outdoor and environmental education,
- outdoor health (including adventure therapy),
- outdoor tourism (adventure/ nature-based tourism), and
- associated support services (e.g. land and water management, infrastructure, sector training and development, other support services, retail sales).

The mission of Outdoors Queensland is to ensure that Queensland's outdoor sector is empowered, supported and valued. Our vision that everyone can enjoy the health and well-being benefits of the outdoors through a thriving Queensland outdoor sector.

Outdoors Queensland appreciates the opportunity to contribute to this important process. Outdoors Queensland is proud to be a member of Outdoor Council of Australia (OCA) - we support the submission made to this inquiry by Outdoor Council of Australia and would like to take the opportunity to add to the OCA submission.

In 2023, Outdoors Queensland conducted the first Queensland Outdoor Census¹. We are pleased to be able to share some of the findings of the Queensland Outdoor Census 2023 to help inform this inquiry.

Small business and not-for-profit and community organisations represent the majority of outdoor organisations across the outdoor industry in Queensland and Australia. Many of these organisations are located in regional and remote areas. Most Queensland-located outdoor organisations provide service only in

¹ Accessible online at <https://outdoorsqueensland.com.au/queensland-outdoor-census-2023/>, with report available at https://qorf-media.s3.ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/29172121/Queensland_Outdoor_Census_2023_FinalReport.pdf



their local area, however some organisations provide services across a wider geographic region, whether statewide, Australia-wide or internationally.

We note the terms of reference for this inquiry into small business insurance:

1. access to insurance coverage which meets contemporary business needs, including public liability, professional indemnity, cyber threats, and business interruption;
2. the affordability and availability of these insurance products across different regions and sectors, including regional and remote Australia and high-risk industries;
3. the adequacy of the current regulatory framework in addressing modern insurance challenges; and
4. any related matters.

This submission will focus on the first two points in the above list.

Access to insurance coverage which meets contemporary business needs...

For some outdoor operators, insurance has shifted from a manageable operating cost to a material threat to business viability. Some operators report that insurance is no longer commercially viable.

By its nature, the outdoor industry is an industry that is focussed on mitigating risks and enhancing benefits for participants in what are often perceived as “risky” activities. Most people expect a level of reassurance that organisations providing adventures such as abseiling or downhill mountain biking have processes in place to ensure activities are done in the right ways.

With the support of Commonwealth, State and Territory governments, the Australian outdoor industry has developed the Australian Adventure Activity Standard and Good Practice Guides (AAAS/GPGs), which were released in 2019. The AAAS/GPGs assist operators of all sizes to conduct outdoor activities in safe, responsible ways. Compliance with the AAAS/GPGs is voluntary, however it provides a clear benchmark for operators and also for land/water managers, regulators and insurers.

In 2024, the OCA obtained funding from various State/Territory governments to review the AAAS/GPGs to ensure its ongoing relevance, with the updated AAAS/GPGs scheduled to be released in mid-2026.

Despite these positive developments and concerted efforts to enhance good practice across the outdoor industry, many small businesses operating in the outdoor industry have been “offered” insurance cover with dramatically increased premiums, higher excesses, and a raft of exclusions, in recent years. This has the effect of making the offer of cover effectively pointless for some small businesses, leading to outdoor operators modifying their offerings or being unable to operate.

It should be noted that although the Commonwealth Government contributed funding to the initial development of the AAAS/GPGs, the Commonwealth Government chose not to provide funding to support the review of the AAAS/GPGs.



Affordability and availability of insurance products

Small businesses are offering outdoor activities to provide locals and visitors with opportunities to engage in recreation, education, tourism and health benefits, however the ongoing impacts of increased costs and increased risk exposure negatively affect the operational resilience of the businesses and the wellbeing of the workers and business operators.

Outdoor organisations deal with a combination of risk factors that result in them being especially vulnerable to insurance market stress. These risk factors include exposure to bushfires, cyclones, flooding and severe weather, activity-based considerations, and seasonal cash-flows which result in reduced capacity to absorb cost shocks.

Accordingly, increases in insurance premiums can result in decisions to cancel events, cease particular activities, reduce necessary investment or withdraw completely from the provision of outdoor activities.

As stated in the introduction to the OCA submission, public liability insurance is not discretionary for outdoor businesses. Public liability insurance is a prerequisite for operating on public land, contracting with government agencies and schools, accessing permits, licences and leases, and maintaining community trust.

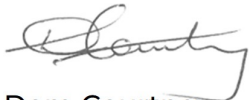
However, provision of public liability insurance is discretionary for insurers. In recent years, we have seen a dramatic decline in the number of insurers willing to underwrite particular outdoor activities, while insurers who continue to offer this cover have significantly increased premiums.

The OCA submission makes the point that “the availability, affordability and suitability of public liability insurance has become one of the most significant structural barriers to business viability, workforce participation and service continuity across the outdoor industry.” Availability, affordability and suitability of other forms of insurance (including property insurance, cyber insurance, and business interruption cover) only exacerbates this problem for small businesses, including those operating in the outdoor industry.

We trust that this submission has been properly made, and will be accepted by the Parliamentary Joint Committee. We would be pleased to provide additional detail regarding elements of this submission. Outdoors Queensland looks forward to further involvement in this important process.

We understand that this submission may be published as part of the consultation process. If you have any queries, please contact us.

Yours sincerely,



Dom Courtney
Executive Officer / Company Secretary

