



Amazon Australia

# SMB Empowerment Report



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# Welcome

Australian small and medium businesses (SMBs) have weathered a perfect storm over the past 12 months, with a pandemic, global supply chain disruptions and economic instability. It's also been a year of unprecedented transformation and innovation, with many SMBs looking to become more digital, global and sustainable.

Part One of this report charts growth and resilience among Australian-based sellers in Amazon stores. Part Two uses specially commissioned research, from independent research agency YouGov, to examine the state of SMBs more broadly in Australia. Although Amazon Sellers may be included in trends outlined in Part Two, the purpose was to understand the larger landscape across multiple industries, including retail by surveying over 1,500 Australian SMBs. It explores how Australian SMBs as a sector have fared over the past 12 months, their confidence for the future and the factors they see as leading to their success.

Supporting our SMB sellers succeed is a top priority for Amazon. We strive to actively empower SMBs in our store with a range of business tools, trainings and marketing opportunities.

It has never been more evident than it is now that the most resilient businesses are the most diverse and connected.

## **YouGov research shows that SMBs who use online marketplaces for exporting are more likely to have grown in the past year.**

Amazon stores enable anyone with a great product to start selling online to consumers across the globe. Amazon provides sellers with extensive tools and training to help them list their products and begin managing or growing a new or existing business.

Our aim is to empower the next generation of entrepreneurs and brand owners to grow, digitise and sell locally and globally.



# Part One

## Amazon: Empowering SMBs

**Every minute**, Australian Amazon sellers, many of whom are SMBs, sell **fifty products** through Amazon stores globally, contributing to a total of almost **27 million** units sold by Australian sellers in the 12 months to June 2022 representing more than **15%** growth on the prior year.

# Amazon at a glance



Australian businesses sell in Amazon stores, many of which are small and medium businesses.



Australian sellers are selling on Amazon stores internationally to customers around the world.

Australian businesses selling on Amazon globally have created more than



in Australia to support their Amazon-related business activities.

Australian sellers sold almost 27 million units in Amazon stores in the 12 months to June 2022, up more than



on the prior year.

In the past 12 months, Australian sellers on Amazon achieved an average of



in sales on Amazon stores.

Amazon has launched over



new features, tools and services for Australian sellers since January 2019.



Australian sellers are based in areas outside major cities, including regional Australia.

Globally, we have more than

**28,000**  
people focused on supporting our selling partners in creating thriving businesses selling in Amazon's stores

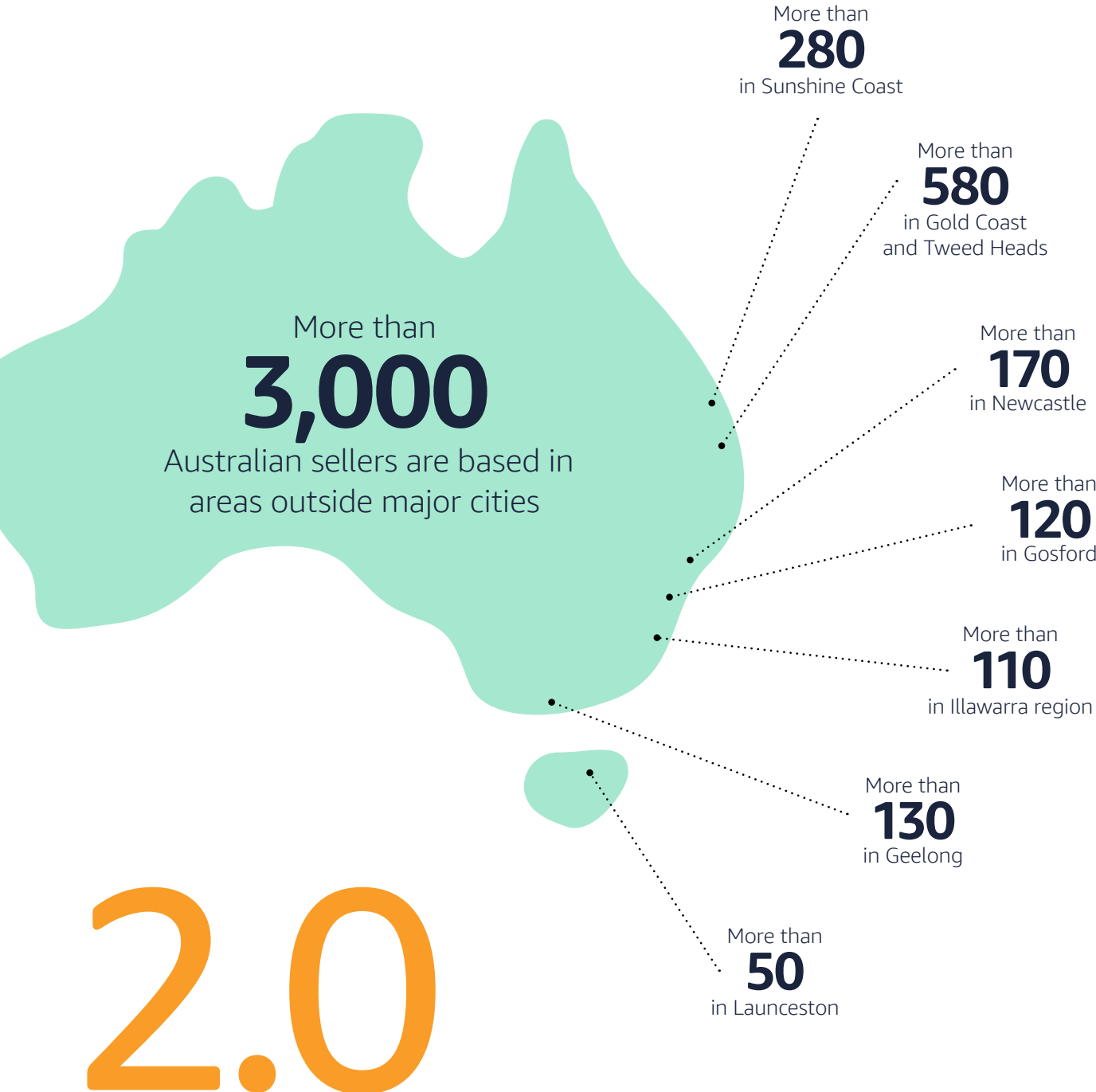
# 1.0

# Regional hotspots

While many sellers are located within major metropolitan centres, key regional economies are also benefiting from being home to Amazon SMB sellers. Over one in ten sellers are located in areas outside our major cities. Regional hubs including the Gold Coast & Tweed Heads, Sunshine Coast, Newcastle, Geelong, Gosford, Illawarra region and Launceston are home to significant numbers of sellers, many of whom are SMBs.

More than 3,000 Australian sellers are based in areas outside major cities, including regional Australia and many are SMBs.

Some of the regional business hubs, selling in Amazon stores:



# Part Two

## Impact and empowerment for Australian SMBs

# Executive summary

In Part Two of this report, we examine and explore the current state and aspirations of Australia's SMBs.

Through this report we have sought to understand broad trends within the SMB landscape, outside of our known Amazon Seller cohort. Working with our research partner YouGov we examined the experiences of more than 1500 SMBs operating in eleven sectors of the economy including retail, technology and manufacturing, to better understand Australians' key priorities, their confidence in both the local and global economy and the factors supporting and hampering their growth.

In particular, we have focused on exploring the impact and opportunities that using online stores to export goods overseas can offer SMBs as well as their attitudes and aspirations towards selling internationally.

Overall, Australia's SMB sector has reported that growth has varied considerably. Of those surveyed, 37% experienced stable revenue, 38% say it has increased and 25% that it has decreased over the past 12 months.. Within this, growth has been disproportionately skewed towards the businesses we surveyed with between 50 and 199 employees, with almost two thirds (64%) reported increase revenue compared to just 38% overall.

Despite growth, SMBs report low levels of confidence regarding the future of both the local and global economies. Only one in five (21%) SMB owners and key decision makers say they feel confident about the global economy over the next 12 months. The key challenges locally that SMBs say are currently impacting their business include economic uncertainty (51%), energy costs (33%) and rising labour costs (26%), however within the retail sector nearly half (42%) identify supply chain as the primary challenge.

Within the landscape of SMBs using online stores, the research found high levels of engagement. Among exporters, more than half (54%) of SMB owners and key decision makers surveyed reported their businesses use online stores to sell their goods or services overseas.

The benefits of exporting are also clear. SMBs surveyed who sell internationally were more likely to have reported increased revenues over the past 12 months (53% of exporting SMBs increased their revenues vs 35% who did not export).

Finally, the research has identified the unmet desire amongst Australian SMBs to offer more Australian manufactured goods and services. Almost six in ten (58%) SMB owners and key decision makers say they would like to offer more Australian manufactured goods and services in their business. Only 41% of their operations, on average, rely on locally made goods.

A central theme within this research has been that SMBs using online market places to export are more likely to have grown in the past year compared to those who are not using them (64% compared to 43%).

As we look ahead to increasingly uncertain times, driving opportunities for business to engage with online stores for export should be a key consideration in policies designed to support Australia's SMB sector.



# The Business Environment

The past several years have been a challenging time for businesses across the globe. This is particularly true in Australia where extended periods of lockdowns, challenges in global supply chains and border closures, and economic uncertainty have significantly impacted ongoing operations including across the retail sector.

## Stability or growth in the face of challenging times

Despite these challenges, our YouGov research showed that the majority of Australian SMBs surveyed report stable revenues or growth during this period, with 75% of SMBs reporting that revenues had either increased (38%) or stayed the same (37%). Of these, one in ten (9%) reported a significant increase in growth while one quarter (25%) reported reduced revenues.

Growth was most evident for the larger SMBs we surveyed (with between 50 and 199 employees) where just under two thirds (64%) reported an increase in revenues.

SMBs from the manufacturing (56%) and health or medical services sectors (53%) are most likely to say their overall business revenue has increased over the past 12 months.

Within the retail sector, 47% of SMBs said they recorded an increase in revenue while around one in three (30%) stayed the same and nearly one in four (23%) saw a decrease in revenue. Within this, 37% of retail SMBs who sold overseas saw increased revenue from exporting with an even split (31% each) of the remainders who reported no change and those who saw a decrease in export revenue.

Early stage SMBs were also more likely to report an increase in overall business revenue over the past twelve months compared to more established businesses with 49% of SMBs in operation for up to five years reporting an increase in revenue compared to 35% for those operating for between 5 and 20 years and 26% for those with over 20 years of operations.

Notably, exporting businesses, especially those from businesses who use online stores to export, were more likely than those from businesses who are not currently exporting to say their overall revenue increased over the past 12 months (53% and 64% compared to 35%).

## Percentage reporting an increase in overall business revenue over the past twelve months:



# 1.0

SMBs using online stores to export are more likely to report revenue growth (64%) compared with those who weren't (43%).

### Exporting boosts overall confidence

Australian SMBs are feeling uncertain about the economic future. Just one in five (21%) of SMB owners and key decision makers say they feel confident about the global economy over the next 12 months while more than twice as many (46%) feel unconfident. Of the remaining SMBs, one third (32%) feel neither confident nor unconfident and 2% don't know.

SMB owners and key decision makers from businesses who are currently exporting are more likely than those who are not to say they feel confident about the global economy over the next 12 months (31% to 18%). Confidence in the global economy was even more prevalent amongst SMB owners and key decision makers from businesses who are using online stores to export (40%).

SMBs within the retail sector sit within the middle of pack with 40% reporting being unconfident, 29% feeling neutral about the global economic outlook over the next 12 months and only 28% stating that they felt confident.

This contrasts with SMBs in the Agriculture (45%), Technology (36%) and Manufacturing sectors (34%) who are most likely to feel confident about the global economy over the next 12 months. Those SMBs most likely to feel unconfident are in sectors whose day-to-day operations significantly impacted by pandemic related closures such as Personal care and services (58%) and Arts, entertainment and recreation sectors (56%).

SMB industries most likely to feel Confident about the global economy, next 12 months



Agriculture  
45%



Technology  
36%



Manufacturing  
34%

SMB industries most likely to feel Unconfident about the global economy, next 12 months



Personal care and services  
58%



Arts, entertainment and recreation  
56%

## Online stores address key barriers to growth for exporting retail SMBs

Across all SMBs, the key challenges locally that are impacting their business currently include economic uncertainty (51%), energy costs (33%), rising labour costs (26%), supply chain (23%), access to finance (18%), technology and change (15%), attracting and retaining skilled staff (15%) and red tape and compliance (15%).

In the retail sector, the most pressing issues reported were economic uncertainty (58%), supply chain (42%) and rising labour costs (27%) followed by logistics/distribution (24%). However, there are still a significant number of retail SMBs who responded that their top three challenges fell under attracting and retaining skilled staff (10%) and access to finance (16%), suggesting that some stores are successfully managing their supply chain and logistics challenges.

### Future growth factors

We can see from the trends above that there are strong factors that predict past growth and future confidence in Australian SMBs, specifically:

**Digital capability:** their ability to utilise digital technologies to export goods, particularly their use of digital marketplaces

**International selling:** their ability to grow and diversify revenue through exports

Additionally, we examined two supplementary factors that may influence long-term growth:

**Local buying:** their use of local Australian suppliers in their value chain



**1 in 4 SMBs in the retail sector report experiencing challenges with logistics/distribution**

**Sustainability:** their capability to adapt to a low emission, low waste circular economy

### Local approach

Australian SMBs recognise the importance of using Australian good and services in their supply chains.

Almost six in ten (58%) SMB owners and key decision makers say they would like to offer more Australian manufactured goods and services in their business.

Additionally, many SMBs reported that 41% of their business, on average, relies on Australian manufactured goods or services.

## Ways Amazon is working to support Australian-based Sellers

### Prime Day

Amazon Prime Day is a highly anticipated sales event for businesses selling on Amazon stores, with fantastic savings available to Amazon Prime Members.

Amazon Australia is committed to supporting Australians and Australian businesses to shop local. During its annual Prime Day, Amazon Australia encourages customers to shop from local business brands through the inclusion of Australian SMB brands as part of its marketing activity around the event. In Australia, Prime Day 2022 marked the biggest two days ever for Australian selling partners, many of whom are small and medium businesses selling on amazon.com.au.

### Discover Small Business Brands

Through its Discover Small Business Brands page, Amazon provides a year-round opportunity for Australian customers to shop products from Australian-based small business brands offered by Amazon and its selling partners.

### Amazon Launchpad

Supporting local businesses to get off the ground is a key focus for Amazon Australia. Through the Amazon Launchpad program we work to support Australian start-ups and entrepreneurs to harness the power of retail and grow their business. Alongside its grant program, Amazon Launchpad also enables customers to buy directly from sellers involved in the program.

# Case study: Meet HotTea Mama



HotTea Mama, started in 2017 by co-founders Kate and Bethan, focuses on supporting women.

Inspired by pregnancy and motherhood, Kate and Bethan set out to bring a range of safe, and suitable premium teas for women during pregnancy to Australia.

**“There are so many things you are told you can’t have when you are pregnant or breastfeeding and I felt there should be a brand with things you can have,”** says Kate, **“so I made the suggestion to Bethan that someone should set up a tea business that you can have when you are pregnant.”**

Based on their success they have expanded our range to support all women in their wellness; from periods to pregnancy, birth to parenthood, sleep and menopause.

For HotTea Mama, Amazon helped connect the business with those looking for quite a specific product.

**“We knew we were a good fit for Amazon because even though people don’t know our brand name, we meet a specific need that people are searching for.”**

HotTea Mama has reached people all across the globe, with their products popping up in the UK, USA, Dubai and the UAE, Poland and Germany.

**“A year ago, we started in Australia, we knew with the rise of Amazon in Australia it would be good time to grow.”**

For HotTea Mama, the major differences here have been in shipping and logistics.

**“In Australia we have gone for Fulfilment by Amazon so the onus isn’t on us.**

**Amazon connects customers to HotTea Mama’s products, takes the pressure off us for the delivery logistics and our sales deliver us a consistent cash flow, while we work to build our brand through wholesale and larger retail accounts.”**

# Digital capability

## Benefits of selling online

More than half (54%) of SMB owners and key decision makers surveyed by YouGov say their business uses online marketplaces to export their goods/services overseas.

SMBs with 50-199 employees (75%) are more likely to be using online stores for exporting than their smaller SMB counterparts (2-9 employees: 58% and sole traders: 49%)

Virtually all (99%) SMBs surveyed that export goods online using online marketplaces believe there are benefits from using this channel.

According to SMBs who export via online marketplaces, the top three benefits from using online stores for exporting goods are ease of use (56%), direct access to customers (51%) and reputation of the online store brand (40%).

Other benefits that SMBs say they gain from exporting goods online are inventory and shipping management (37%), customer service/support (36%), marketing support (34%) and financial assurance (26%).

On average, exporting SMBs who use online marketplaces to export say 41% of their annual export revenue comes from online stores.

## The digital divide

Not all SMBs have embraced digital to the same extent, but there are few barriers to a seller selling online.

Larger SMBs we surveyed with between 50-199 employees say they earn more of their annual export revenue online compared to smaller SMBs (50-199 employees: 48%, 10-49 employees: 39%, 2-9 employees: 35%).

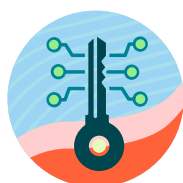
There is also a generational gap in accessing digital tools, with use of online stores for exporting more prevalent amongst Gen Z (72%) and Millennial (66%) SMB owners and key decision makers than their Gen X (46%) and Baby Boomer (35%) counterparts.

Virtually all (99%) SMBs surveyed that export goods using online marketplaces believe there are benefits from using this channel.

## Top 3 benefits from using online stores for export:



Ease of use  
56%



Direct access to customers  
51%



Reputation of the online store brand  
40%

# 2.0

# What Amazon is doing to support digital capability among its SMB sellers

## Seller training

Our Seller University helped Australian sellers master Amazon's tools and grow their businesses by offering courses on more than 1,800 topics, including how to start selling on Amazon, how Fulfilment By Amazon works, and advertising tips for brand owners.

## Seller Summit

Since 2017, Amazon Australia's annual Seller Summit has provided this free ongoing professional development and networking opportunities for Australian SMBs. The event focuses on providing guidance and insights to support both current and prospective sellers in ways to establish, grow and expand their business in the Amazon Australia Store.

## Selling and data tools

Amazon's Seller portal, Seller Central, provides SMBs with a detailed and customisable overview of their operations, sales performance, advertising metrics, and logistics capabilities. The portal provides data and insights to enable optimisation, testing and learning as businesses grow.

**With Fulfilment by Amazon (FBA), businesses are able to store products in Amazon's fulfilment centres and Amazon will pick, pack, ship, and provide customer service for these products. As one of the most advanced fulfilment networks in the world, FBA can help businesses save time, make money, scale businesses and reach more customers.**

# Case study: Meet Little Archer & Co



Sunshine Coast-based Denise Billsborough was shocked to discover the true cost of having a baby when she fell pregnant with her son, Archer. Recognising a real need for on-trend, convenient items, for both babies and toddlers, at a more affordable price point, Denise launched her baby brand Little Archer & Co. Four years later, Denise has built a thriving online six-figure business with Amazon, whilst maintaining her part-time corporate career. Bestsellers include her luxury baby nest, toddler scooters and play gyms.

Speaking about her experience, Denise explains:

**“Establishing an e-commerce business is a lot of work for one person. Taking the leap to launch my business with Amazon Australia certainly helped make the process so much easier.**

**From day dot, I’ve used Fulfilment by Amazon; not having to worry about the storing, picking, packing and shipping removes a huge bunch of tasks, expenses and time. Even throughout COVID lockdowns, this seamless process has continued whilst I worked from home.**

**The cost savings of shipping with Amazon also enable me to deliver a more competitive price for my customers – helping our business continue its commitment to providing high quality products to families across Australia and now overseas.**

**All-in-all Amazon looks after several areas of my business operations, allowing me more time to focus on sourcing safe and on-trend products, that parents can trust in.”**

# Exporting internationally

## Global growth in the pipeline for Aussie SMBs

As SMBs move towards more digital operations, many are seeing the opportunity of selling around the world.

YouGov research showed six in ten (57%) SMB owners and key decision makers believe that there are benefits of international expansion for their businesses.

The benefits of exporting are clear. SMBs surveyed who sell internationally were more likely to have increased their revenues over the past 12 months (53% of exporting SMBs increased their revenues vs 35% who did not export).

SMBs are most likely to say the main benefits for their business from international expansion are increased revenue (38%), access to new customers (35%) and larger markets for growth than in Australia (24%). Other benefits cited include diversification of revenue streams (21%) and improving their brand reputation (20%).

Within the retail space, around one in four (27%) of Australian SMBs surveyed say they are currently selling internationally, compared to one in five (19%) Australian SMBs overall.

Amongst those SMBs not exporting, a further one in five (19%) SMBs say they are planning to start exporting, including 8% planning to do so in the next 12 months, and one in ten (11%) in more than 12 months. This figure is significantly higher for retail-sector SMBs, where 30% who are not currently exporting reported plans to export internationally, of which 12% expected to commence this within next year.

# 3.0

In contrast, of Amazon's 14,000 Australian sellers, Amazon's own data shows that nearly half (44%) exported internationally, indicating Amazon can help ease the barriers for Australian SMBs to sell internationally.

On average, YouGov research shows that SMBs who are currently exporting say one third (33%) of their annual revenue comes from exporting.

Based on revenue earned, Australian SMBs are most likely to say their top three export opportunities are North America (55%), Europe and the UK (54%) and Asia and Pacific (excluding China) (34%). Other regions SMBs included in their top three for export revenue include China (16%), Middle East (11%) and South America (10%).

SMBs in the Manufacturing (45%), Technology services (39%), Arts, entertainment and recreation (38%) and Business Services (35%) sectors are most likely to say they are currently exporting.

## SMB sectors most likely to say they are currently exporting



**Manufacturing**

45%



**Technology services**

39%



**Arts, entertainment and recreation**

38%



**Business Services**

35%

Interestingly, export remains a key growth opportunity for Australian retail SMBs with only 27% of retail businesses surveyed within this category stating that they are currently selling overseas.



## Creating equal access to global customers

Currently, there is a disparity between SMBs in their plans to sell internationally, based on number of employees, gender and age of owner.

Larger SMBs who are not currently exporting who have 50-199 employees (45%) and 10-49 employees (46%) are more likely to say they plan to start exporting compared to smaller SMBs with 2-9 employees (26%) and Sole Traders (14%).

Similarly, younger generations, particularly Gen Z's are more likely to believe that there are benefits for their business from international expansion.

The top three barriers to international expansion SMB owners and key decision makers identified are financial risk (26%), shipping and logistics (25%) and capital expenses (21%).

Industry, governments and civil society must work together to reduce barriers to international selling to empower Australian SMBs to grow and compete globally.



Younger generations, particularly Gen Z's are more likely to believe that there are benefits for their business from international expansion

79%



compared with Millennials

63%



Gen X

58%



and Baby Boomers

43%

## How Amazon is empowering its SMB sellers to export internationally

### Shipping and fulfilment services

Thousands of Australian sellers use Fulfilment by Amazon (FBA). FBA provided Australian sellers an average 26% uplift in sales on Amazon.com.au in 2020\*. At a global level, FBA helps ship products to customers in over 200 countries and territories. At the end of 2021, Amazon's global fulfilment services were supported by 400 fulfilment centres, more than 150 sortation centres and over 1,000 delivery stations worldwide.

In Australia, Amazon operates six Fulfilment Centres across Australia including Australia's largest

warehouse its Robotic Fulfilment Centre at Kemps Creek in Western Sydney which is capable of holding 20 million products.

### Seller tools

Last year, Amazon delivered hundreds of new tools and services globally to help selling partners launch new products, optimise their listings, and expand their business. This adds to existing tools such as Amazon Brand Analytics, which helps brand owners make strategic decisions about their product portfolio and marketing activities.

\*Comparing performance of similar products with at least on sale 60 days pre and post a product's enrolment in FBA in 2020. Future results may vary based on a wide range of factors, including but not limited to, seasonality, selling price, and existing fulfilment solution. Amazon does not guarantee any particular outcome for your business by using FBA.

# Case study: Meet Bakslap



Started in 2017, Bakslap was created by founder Raph McGowan following the tragic loss of his 31-year-old sister Tess to Melanoma. Raph developed a product that would spread the message about sun safety and get the conversation started about skin cancer.

**"I wanted to be able to impact lives" says Raph**  
**"I created something that was a little bit different,**  
**that at least started the conversation."**

For Raph, starting to export his products was about far more than an increase in customer base and revenue, it was about spreading his message further than just Australia.

**"We want to get to as many people as possible in Australia and overseas" says Raph**  
**"Amazon allows you to still share your brand story.**  
**To be able to do this in a whole new customer base in Australia and the US is why we jumped at the opportunity to join Amazon."**

Since exporting, Bakslap have seen an 8.9% increase in sales and added an expanded international customer base. The 2021-22 financial year saw an additional 69% growth and increase in export revenue (based on the previous year). By selling globally with Amazon, Bakslap is continuing to grow its presence around the world.

# Sustainability

## Statistics on perceived importance, capability and growth

YouGov research shows that almost six in ten (57%) SMB owners and key decision makers say sustainable business practices are important for their business while just 14% say they are unimportant, 25% that they are neither important nor unimportant and 4% don't know.

Australian SMBs are well on their way in implementing sustainable business practices as one in four SMB business owners and key decision makers say the implementation of sustainable practices is at an advanced stage and another three in ten (29%) at an intermediate stage.

With a total of 53% SMBs at an advanced or intermediate stage of implementation, local businesses are progressing well in this area, however, there is still more work to do.

## The generational gap

Gen Z (67%), Millennial (68%) and Gen X (57%) SMB owners and key decision makers are more likely than their Baby Boomer counterparts (42%) to say sustainable business practices are important for their business.

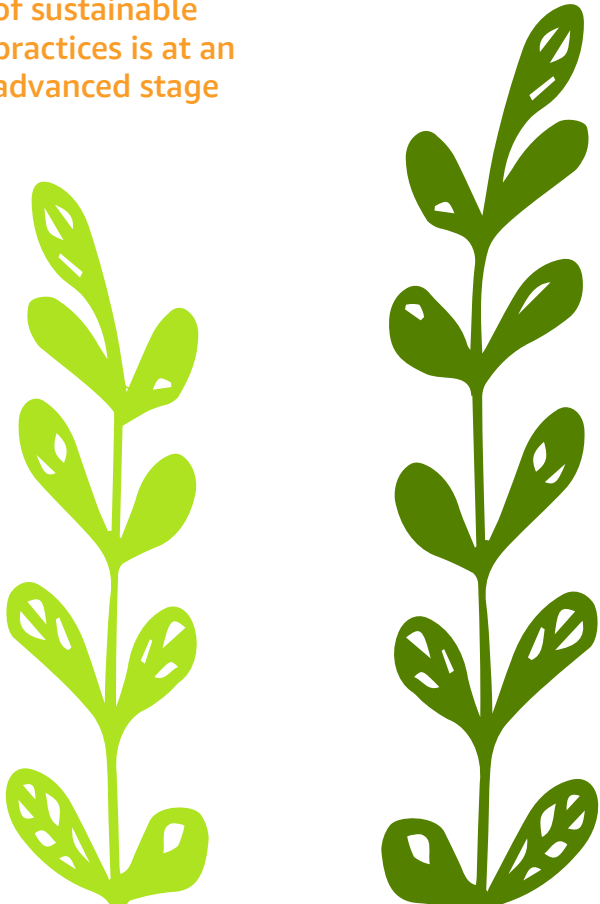
Correspondingly, although there is a gap between belief and behaviour, there is a positive correlation between those who think sustainability is important and those who have acted on it in their business.

Gen Z (48%) and Millennial (28%) SMB owners and key decision makers are more likely than their Gen X (19%) and Baby Boomer counterparts (16%) to say the implementation of sustainable business practices within their business is at an advanced stage.

Interestingly, SMB owners and key decision makers from businesses who are exporting (39%) and especially those who export via online channels (49%) are more likely than those from SMBs who are not exporting (20%) to say the implementation of sustainable business practices within their business is at an advanced stage.

**23%** and another **29%**  
**SMB business owners and key decision makers say the implementation of sustainable practices is at an advanced stage** and another **29%** at an intermediate stage.

# 4.0



# Case study: Meet Zenify



Launched in 2017, Zenify offered founder Andonis Sakatis a pathway out of the 9-to-5 through the creation of an e-commerce business that allowed him to work for himself and make a positive difference. To make this vision a reality, Andonis partnered with Amazon Australia for a wider reach and boost product sales.

Andonis credits being a 100% e-commerce store in allowing the business to thrive throughout the pandemic and reach an expanding customer base.

**“I was already entrenched in that way of running a business. When the pandemic hit, we were already set up to cope with that sort of disruption,”** Andonis explains.

**“I saw that during the pandemic some warehouses were struggling to implement new process and procedures, but Amazon had international experience and were able to operate more smoothly than others in the space.”**

A credit to its success, Zenify gives back to local charities and organisations by donating a portion of their products to a cause that aligns with their brands – Zenify Earth (eco-friendly products), and Zenify Pets (everything you need for your furry friends).

**“We have worked with pet shelters to create an adoption pack with everything a new dog owner could need, in addition to donating 500 collapsible dog bowls for a fundraiser,”** Andonis says,

**“We have purposely steered our development towards these products, so we are able to donate a surplus on an increasingly regular basis.”**

Amazon Australia’s experience and reach meant Andonis had less to worry about when it came to navigating the difficult time.

# Methodology

## Data on Amazon's sellers

Data for this report was drawn from Amazon's own data on seller numbers and sales volumes for the time period 1 July 2021 - 30 June 2022. Australian businesses were identified based on the country of origin information provided by sellers to Amazon. Currency quoted is AUD unless otherwise specified.

## YouGov survey of Australian SMBs

The insights in the second part of this report are supported by research conducted by YouGov. Research was conducted online between 29 July–3 August 2022, involving 1,556 SMB owners and key decision makers from Australian businesses with less than 200 employees.

Following the completion of interviewing, the data was weighted by business size and state, to ensure the results are representative of the broader population of SMBs in Australia.

# 5.0

