



Media Release

For release: 18 May 2012

Ethnic firms poised for key role in export-led recovery

Overseas ties and export know-how 'source of strength for economy', says ANZ

Immigrant businesspeople are poised to play a leading role in New Zealand's efforts to build an export-led economic recovery, according to early findings from the country's most in-depth business survey.

"One thing that comes through very clearly is the strong links ethnic businesspeople have with markets overseas. This sets them apart from many other small and medium-sized businesses, and is a source of strength for the entire economy," said Fred Ohlsson, ANZ's Managing Director Business Banking.

Speaking at the ANZ-backed Ethnic People in Commerce (EPIC NZ) conference in Auckland today, Mr Ohlsson said: "Business and government have a role to play in helping link ethnic firms to New Zealand networks and realise their business potential – while unleashing wider benefits for New Zealand business and the economy. Today's conference is an excellent example of how business and government can work together to achieve this."

Mr Ohlsson revealed the findings on ethnic businesses two weeks ahead of the launch of ANZ's 2012 Privately-owned Business Barometer, a comprehensive survey of 4,000 businesses across New Zealand.

"We heard from hundreds of ethnic businesspeople as part of this survey which asked them how they were doing, and where they wanted to be. As mostly small and medium-sized businesses, these enterprises are at the heart of economic activity – 90 per cent of NZ firms employ fewer than 20 people. Add to this their international connections and exporting experience and it's clear these firms have much to offer towards an export-led economic future."

The survey reveals that ethnic businesspeople are leading the way in doing business with some of New Zealand's key export markets. Those with ethnic ties to China, India, Japan and Vietnam are far more likely than others to be doing business in those markets. And many are also doing business in other markets.

Businesses looking to operate internationally say they struggle to build up offshore connections and networks. One in four says cultural differences and language barriers are holding back their export ambitions. A similar number point to a lack of offshore distribution channels, while one in five struggles with foreign business practices.

"While these firms are struggling to find contacts, customers and distribution channels abroad, many ethnic firms already have these. And they know how to make them work for their business," Mr Ohlsson said.

ANZ New Zealand is the country's largest financial institution and one of the nation's largest companies. Its brands include ANZ Bank, National Bank, UDC Finance, OnePath, EFTPOS Bonus Bonds, and Direct Broking. Around one in two New Zealanders has a financial relationship with ANZ New Zealand.

“Many immigrant businesspeople are achieving amazing things in a tough business environment. This is testament to the ideas, energy and determination they have to build a more prosperous future.

“Often they’re working with long-standing contacts and business networks in their country of origin. Some trade very successfully in other countries too. Many of the things that are weaknesses for other businesses are, in fact, strengths for ethnic firms.

“With ANZ’s presence in 28 countries across Asia-Pacific, we can see the enormous opportunities for New Zealand businesses overseas. Working together will be the key to delivering what’s best for businesses and best for the economy,” Mr Ohlsson said.

For media inquiries contact: Pete Barnao, Corporate Affairs, ANZ New Zealand, ph 09 252 6623 or 027 277 3139

ANZ Privately-owned Business Barometer

Now in its sixth year, the Privately-owned Business Barometer is New Zealand’s most comprehensive business survey. This year’s survey questioned around 4,000 business owners about the issues affecting them, how their business was performing, and their views on the challenges ahead. Findings announced today relate specifically to ethnic businesses, and were released ahead of the launch of the Barometer report on 1 June.