

SMALL BUSINESS, REVIEW OF GOVERNMENT SERVICES

1824. Mrs C.L. Edwardes to the Minister for Small Business

I refer the Minister to *The Australian* dated 5 August 2003 and the article titled, 'Government still not on the level' and ask -

- (a) has the Minister seen the report referred to in the article;
- (b) if not, will the Minister make himself acquainted with the report;
- (c) will the Minister initiate a review of Government services to small business in Western Australia; and
- (d) if not, why not?

Mr R.C. KUCERA replied:

- (a) Yes
- (b) Not applicable
- (c)-(d) No. State Government services to Western Australian small businesses are provided primarily through the Small Business Development Corporation (SBDC) and the network of 37 Business Enterprise Centres (BECs) across the State. Western Australia is the only State or Territory in Australia with a dedicated Small Business Development Corporation.

An independent statutory review of the Small Business Development Corporation Act 1983, which governs the operations of the SBDC, was undertaken during the first half of 2002. This review assessed the SBDC's performance and its appropriateness in meeting the future needs of small business development in Western Australia. The clear message to come from this review was that the SBDC is performing well in delivering on its statutory obligations under the Small Business Development Corporation Act 1983.

In addition, an independent review of the BEC network is currently being undertaken, in keeping with a recommendation arising from the review of the Small Business Development Corporation Act 1983.

Small business use of the SBDC and BEC network is demonstrated by client statistics which reveal that, in 2002-03, some 154,682 clients accessed services or information from the SBDC, either directly or indirectly, and a further 115,140 clients accessed services or information on government assistance programs through the BEC network.

These service levels parallel small business growth in Western Australia which, according to the most recent Australian Bureau of Statistics figures, increased on an annual average basis by 8.6% in the twelve month period to 2000-01 and by 4.8% over the longer term (17 years) – both well above the national averages of 4.4% and 3.5% respectively.

Given these levels of performance and current levels of access to services by small business in Western Australia, the recent review of the Small Business Development Corporation Act 1983, and the current review of the BEC network, it is not necessary to undertake any further reviews of Government services to small business in Western Australia.