



MEDIA STATEMENT

LJILJANNA RAVLICH MLC

**Shadow Minister for Commerce; Small Business; Government Accountability;
Tourism; Training**

Monday 22 February 2010

Barnett Government fails small business

Small businesses across the State have been neglected by the Barnett Government, Shadow Minister for Small Business Ljiljanna Ravlich said today.

Ms Ravlich said called on Treasurer Troy Buswell to reveal his plans for the Small Business Centre network amid speculation the Small Business Development Corporation (SBDC) was set to be privatised or at the very least some of its functions outsourced.

“WA has a total of 27 Small Business Centres, 19 in the regions and eight in the metropolitan area. They provide a critical service across the State and offer much needed free support and advice to small businesses,” she said.

“The Barnett Government must resist the State’s Chamber of Commerce and Industry pre-budget proposal to government to privatise the Small Business Development Corporation to a fee for service model as it would exclude those small businesses who cannot afford to pay.

“Mr Buswell has made no secret that he has instructed the SBDC to form partnerships with the CCI’s Small Enterprise Network which was launched last week.

“Many in the industry are fearful that this is a precursor to privatisation and contracting out of SBDC functions.

“The Barnett Government’s track record in small business has been a major disappointment to the sector and to the employees of SBDC, many who are uncertain about the future of their jobs.”

Ms Ravlich said the Minister was responsible for downgrading the SBDC from an independent organisation to a branch of the Department of Commerce for the first time in 25 years.

“WA does not have a separate Government agency devoted to the development of the small business sector, nor is there a Minister dedicated to small business,” she said.

“The future of the Small Business Centre network now hangs in the balance.

“Small business makes an enormous contribution to our national and state economy and is often the life-blood of communities in WA.”

Ms Ravlich said believed Mr Buswell had met with the board of SBDC board just once in the last 18 months.

“As someone who was happy to wear his small business credentials as a badge of honour in Opposition, Mr Buswell has failed to support small business in Government.

“Mr Buswell must immediately guarantee the future of the SBDC and rule out privatisation.”

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