



Media Release

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WA's Small Business needs more assistance not less

Western Australia, once our nation's great engine room of economic prosperity is teetering on the brink of implosion and the Barnett Government needs to provide additional support to small businesses especially those in the regions rather than playing the dangerous game of tinkering with vital small business support services by cutting funding from Belmont Business Enterprise Centre-Small Business Centre, says Business Enterprise Centres Australia.

"Any government worthy of managing a state's economy should know that Australia's two million plus small businesses keep this country alive and employ more than half the workforce," says BEC Australia chairperson, Peter Murray.

"That's a lot of jobs and the Barnett Government should be paying close attention to the health and vitality of the small business sector, especially when figures revealed this week show WA job ads have plummeted almost 50 per cent in 12 months – the worst performance in Australia.

"The WA government should be allocating additional funding for small business advisory services, rather than terminating funding for a thriving, job-fuelling BEC-SBC and scattering the funding to a few regional BECs that the SBDC admits are under financial stress. All WA's regional BECs require significant additional funding to assist with a range of issues including the downturn in the mining industry and its impact on regional business across industries.

"On a national level, a ten per cent drop in employment among small businesses equates to 450,000 people out of work. Can WA really absorb the repercussions of not adequately funding Small Business Advisory services?

"This piecemeal move seems designed to curry favour in the bush and appears tokenistic with no sign of a serious intention to give the regions the support they desperately need.

"Now is the time for the WA Government to treat the Small Business sector with due respect and to properly fund support, advisory, and development services.

"The three courageous and honourable steps to take are:

- Reverse the SBDC decision to strip funds from Belmont BEC-SBC and at least maintain funding levels for all metropolitan centres

- Work tirelessly to find extra, serious funding for regional small business support services in the order of \$25,000 per centre
- Move immediately to make the SBDC a truly independent body, as detailed on the BEC Australia website (<http://tinyurl.com/independent-sbdc>)

“The clock is ticking and the WA government has a great responsibility to the people of WA not to squander the efforts of its small business people who are the backbone of its economy. Robbing Peter to pay Paul is not just an exercise in futility; it is a very dangerous move at this time in history when the stakes are so high. I cannot imagine anyone would want the ‘undermining of small business’ through the non-provision of adequate support as part of their legacy!”

ENDS

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BACKGROUND BEC AUSTRALIA INFORMATION FROM www.beca.org.au

Business Enterprise Centres operate throughout all states and territories in Australia endeavouring to work with and on behalf of the micro and small business sectors.

BECA Charter: -

BEC Australia is a not-for-profit organisation whose primary role is to support and grow the national network of Business Enterprise Centres and provide representation on behalf of its members to key stakeholders.

BECA Vision:-

A nationwide network of Business Enterprise Centres that are recognised as the first and best point of contact for small business operators seeking quality business information, advice and guidance.