

BUSINESS LOCAL PROGRAM

**15. Mrs G.J. GODFREY to the Minister for Small Business:**

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** Mr Speaker!

**Mrs G.J. GODFREY:** Sit down!

**The SPEAKER:** Thank you for doing my job, member for Belmont!

**Mrs G.J. GODFREY:** This government reformed the delivery of small business advisory services by creating Business Local, which commenced operations on 1 July 2015. Can the minister please provide an update on its progress?

**Mr J.M. FRANCIS replied:**

I thank the member for Belmont. Mr Speaker, if I could just quickly indulge the house. On behalf of every member of this house I put on the record our appreciation of the superhuman effort of all our emergency response volunteers and career firefighters over the summer fire season. It has obviously been exceptionally difficult and they are still fighting a fire today in Bibra Lake. We also pass our respects and best wishes to the guys in Tasmania who are having a very tough day again today.

In 2013 we did a comprehensive review of the small business centre program across Western Australia. We want to try to do a little bit more—a little bit more professionally and a little bit more effectively—in the role of government providing small business advice to anyone with a small business to help develop the business from inception to a big business idea. We resolved to change the system into the Business Local program, with 12 separate regions across Western Australia. As a result, the change from the small business centre program to the Business Local program has seen a massive shift from resources being tied up in bricks and mortar and administrative costs into actual delivery of business advice to small businesses. Now, 90 per cent of funds to the program go directly to giving positive and professional advice to small businesses across the state, which has seen an increase of 66 per cent in the numbers of business advisers that have provided advice through the organisation under the umbrella of the Small Business Development Corporation. In the first six months, advisers have seen almost 3 000 businesses. It is only early days, but indicatively at this stage it is reported that they have generated an additional \$16 million of turnover in those 3 000 small businesses, and they have reported through those small businesses reporting back through the system that nearly \$5 million in additional capital has been injected into those small businesses all over Western Australia as a result of the advice they have been given. Obviously, it has also created jobs. They reckon that through the investment advice they have been given through those small business advisers, they have created an additional economic impact to the state totalling around \$25 million. That is a good return for taxpayers and a good result for small businesses. I know a few people knocked it at the time and said that it was not going to work, but at the end of the day what small businesses want is professional, timely advice from a professional organisation that gets out and meets them face to face, rather than them having to turn up to bricks and mortar buildings where all the taxpayers' money has been spent on providing infrastructure rather than services. It is a great result for small business and we will continue to do everything we can to support small businesses across Western Australia.

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Mandurah, your turn!