

Division 67: Small Business Development Corporation, \$12 065 000 —

Ms J.M. Freeman, Chairman.

Mr J.M. Francis, Minister for Small Business.

Mr D. Eaton, Small Business Commissioner.

Mr R. Buttsworth, Director, Corporate Resources.

The CHAIRMAN: The member for Maylands.

Ms L.L. BAKER: Where are we up to with the tenders being let for the new program, the business centres?

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: That is a very good question. I will not give the member the whole long answer because I will take up all the time answering it.

Ms L.L. BAKER: No.

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: The commissioner is finalising contracts. I will ask the commissioner to elaborate.

Mr D. Eaton: Yes, we are finalising contracts with the preferred tenderers. I expect them to be finalised within the next few days and the program will be in place by 1 July with the new providers.

Ms L.L. BAKER: I do not think this question is commercial-in-confidence, but the agency has gone from having 25 centres to a new configuration. What will be the total number of suppliers of the service? Have they gone from 25 to nine or three or whatever?

Mr D. Eaton: That is a good question because at the moment the current model is, I would say, town-centric and building-centric, so people think about 25 centres; we have moved to 12 service areas aligned with the regional development commissions. We are expecting approximately a 75 per cent increase in the number of advisers on the ground.

Ms L.L. BAKER: I am sorry, I did not mean that; I meant how many tenders. A whole bunch of agencies applied for tenders.

Mr D. Eaton: Sure.

Ms L.L. BAKER: How many in total did it go to? How many will get tenders?

Mr D. Eaton: Approximately 50 organisations put in tenders, there were 12 contracts and seven organisations have won those contracts, so some have obviously won multiples.

Ms L.L. BAKER: I am just rolling through because we do not have time. I have questions about women that the minister can take on notice, but supplementary information would be good. I am interested to know from the minister how many women are on the Small Business Development Corporation board at the moment.

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: There are three, and the executive director is also there.

Ms L.L. BAKER: Is that three out of 12?

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: That is three out of eight.

Ms L.L. BAKER: Can the minister give me a breakdown of the gender levels—women versus men—in the Small Business Development Corporation agency, and also their levels?

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: I agree to provide as supplementary information a breakdown of staff employed by the Small Business Development Corporation by gender and pay level.

[Supplementary Information No 72.]

Ms L.L. BAKER: I have a couple of further questions on this subject. In the minister's investigative research, has he done any work on gender issues and business, how women get into business, and anything specifically around female participation in a small business or the micro-enterprise sector?

Mr D. Eaton: We have not specifically done research but there is research in that space.

Ms L.L. BAKER: Is it Western Australian?

Mr D. Eaton: I could not tell the member offhand. It would include Western Australia, but certainly there is a high participation rate of women starting and participating in business.

Ms L.L. BAKER: Does the commissioner know what that figure would be?

Mr D. Eaton: No, I could not give that to the member accurately.

Ms L.L. BAKER: Thank you. How many women business clients does the SBDC network see, including from the centre itself; does the minister have that breakdown?

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: No, we do not log gender when we go out to see someone, so I cannot answer that question.

Ms L.L. BAKER: The minister does not; that is fine.

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: As for the SBDC board, I would remind the member that the chairman of the SBDC board, Kitty Prodonovich, is a lovely lady.

The CHAIRMAN: I am sorry, I am going to have to put this division.

The appropriation was recommended.

Meeting suspended from 1.00 to 2.12 pm