

Enterprise

Edit

Council seeks new expertise

Mark Fenton-Jones

The federal Small Business Minister has flagged her intention to revamp the role of the Small Business Council.

In November 2003, Fran Bailey's predecessor, Joe Hockey, established the 12-member SBC, initially for a year. It was chaired by Kim Tunbridge, the founder and chief executive officer of Sydney law firm Jungle Management, and drew its membership from owner-operators in the small business community.

Meeting in Canberra three or four times a year, its three-part charter included advising the minister on issues affecting small business, identifying issues impacting on the growth and development of small business and exploring solutions as well as providing ideas to reduce the red tape burden on small business.

Issues under consideration in the first year included late payments by big business; unfair dismissal laws; tax compliance costs; succession planning; insurance premiums and education and training.

While the SBC functioned along similar lines as it did under Mr Hockey, identifying issues and setting up working groups to provide

SMALL FACTS MISSING

'Everyone loves small business. The problem is there's no agreement on what should be done to ensure small business can compete in an increasingly concentrated business sector.'

Opinion, page 62

recommendations to the minister, Ms Bailey wanted council members to tap into their business networks.

After Ms Bailey took over the small business portfolio, she extended the council's tenure for another two years, but made more use of the business networks of the individual members to support a series of regional forums in 2006 rather than holding quarterly consultative meetings in Canberra. Ms Bailey said that while the name of the council might remain, she was investigating a change in its role.

"I will not be continuing the Small Business Council in its current role," she said. She wants to draw on experiences of similar councils in APEC countries.

Ms Bailey chaired a series of meetings at the APEC SME ministerial conference in Hobart earlier this month.



Fran Bailey wants to change the role of the Small Business Council.

Photo: PAUL JONES

"The new format I put together is going to be very much based on cherry picking," she said.

While praising the work of the former council members, the minister said factors that contributed to its establishment had changed.

"Originally that group was set up as the GST was being introduced. We've come a long way since then."

The new council is expected to

reflect the demand from small business for support in areas such as innovation, marketing and home-based businesses. Membership is likely to be based on expertise in particular areas.

Ms Bailey said she was identifying the key people for the revamped council. An announcement would be made once all appointments were finalised.