

Senate Economics Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Treasury Portfolio
Budget Estimates 2014
3 June to 5 June 2014

Department/ Agency: Treasury

Question: BET 915-918

Topic: Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman

Reference: Written – 12 June 2014

Senator: Wong

Question:

- 915. What new powers will this Ombudsman have?
- 916. With almost every single industry program cut, just where will the Ombudsman refer SB as part of its concierge duties?
- 917. In what areas do we expect the Small Business Commissioner to deliver results that the current Commissioner has failed to achieve?
- 918. How will the new Ombudsman be better equipped over the previous Commissioner?

Answer:

- 915. The Government has committed that the Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman (the Ombudsman) will be given appropriate powers to be a Commonwealth-wide advocate for small businesses and family enterprises; and to provide a Commonwealth-level framework for dispute resolution for small business. Specific powers conferred on the Ombudsman will be established through legislation, which is expected to be released for consultation in late 2014.
- 916. The Ombudsman's concierge function relates to providing a Commonwealth-level framework for dispute resolution. Under this framework the Ombudsman will be a concierge to help smaller businesses with issues, complaints and disputes find the best organisation to deal with their complaint, and it will offer its own alternative dispute resolution service in limited circumstances.
- 917. The Australian Small Business Commissioner was established to provide advocacy and representation of small business interests and concerns to the Australian Government. The Ombudsman will build on and enhance the Australian Small Business Commissioner's functions by establishing a formal, statutory, Commonwealth-level framework to advocate for small business and provide an alternative dispute resolution service.
- 918. The Australian Small Business Commissioner position is not supported by legislation and is engaged as a contractor. Establishing the Ombudsman through a statutory framework will provide the role with a well-defined and transparent framework under which the Ombudsman can independently inform and contribute to the Government's small business agenda. The Ombudsman will also provide a Commonwealth-level framework for dispute resolution for small business.