

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY**WRITTEN QUESTION**

Ms J Carney

to Minister for Business and Economic Development

Business Round Table

1. What is the cost of holding each Business Round Table? How much of this advice has the government actually used directly in policy?

ANSWER

- Ten BRT meetings were held in 2004, in each of the Territory's main centres, with a total of 172 participants attending meetings during that year. To date in 2005, five BRT meetings have been held in Darwin, Alice Springs and Palmerston, with 75 participants in total. (The BRT meetings scheduled for July and August 2005 were cancelled due to the NT election.)
- The BRT is intended as a low-cost community engagement initiative. Approximately \$22 500 was spent on operational costs in 2004-05, comprising meeting expenses (venue hire, catering, meeting papers, etc), travel to regions, provision of web services, and an upgrade to the website and associated database. Approximately \$16 000 is budgeted for BRT operational expenses in 2005-06.
- A diverse range of issues are discussed at Round Table meetings (more than 200 topics in 2003-04), and referred to Agencies for appropriate action. Reports on all actions and outcomes are subsequently posted on the BRT website www.businessroundtable.nt.gov.au for public information.
- The consultation afforded by Business Round Tables has contributed to positive outcomes that have directly assisted businesses in the Northern Territory, and many issues raised at BRT meetings have had a direct and significant influence on Government policy decisions. Recent examples from 2003-04 include:
 - Payroll Tax – throughout 2003-04, BRT participants had consistently reported that payroll tax was a disincentive to small business growth. Government has addressed these concerns by delivering significant payroll tax cuts, increasing the tax-free threshold in 2004 and 2005, with a further increase to take effect in 2006.
 - Population Growth – concerns by BRT participants about steady and sustainable population growth are being addressed by relevant agencies, including DEET, DBERD (formerly DBIRD) and DCM, in initiatives such as the Business and Skilled Migration Strategy and the recent Skills Attraction campaign. Feedback from BRT participants on the effectiveness of these strategies is conveyed to the agencies and contributes to program evaluation and future enhancements.
 - Employment And Workforce Issues – BRT participants have consistently reported difficulties with finding and keeping staff, and this information is conveyed to relevant agencies including DEET. The NT Jobs Plan and Jobs Plan 2 contain a

comprehensive range of employment and training incentive programs which are focussed on the needs of business and industry.

- Procurement – reflecting the importance of Government procurement to local business and industry, and concerns raised by business operators at BRT meetings and other forums, Government introduced a package of procurement reforms including the new 30-day payment policy, improved training for agency procurement officers, and a reduced insurance requirement for certain contracts. Government has also created a new Government Procurement Liaison Officer position to monitor procurement processes and to provide a separate contact for industry in relation to procurement matters.
- Public Liability Insurance – the Government has developed a package of law reforms to create a more stable insurance environment. The reforms have been implemented as part of a nationally agreed framework coordinated through the Insurance Ministers Council. The measures are aimed at improving the availability of insurance cover, containing growth in premium costs, creating greater certainty for insurers, and changing social and legal attitudes towards the assumption of liability for risk.
- The Chief Minister released a two-year overview report in December 2004, which examines these and other BRT activities and outcomes from 2003 to 2004. This report is provided to all BRT participants, and is publicly available on the BRT website.