ANNUAL REPORT OF THE SMALL BUSINESS COMMISSIONER

As the House is aware, the Governor in Executive Council appointed Mr John Chapman as Small Business Commissioner on 25th September 2014.

Since Mr Chapman’s appointment, he has reviewed the operations of the Office and identified a number of discrepancies in the statistical information contained in the 2011/12 and the 2012/13 Annual Reports. These reports were previously tabled on 5th March 2013 and 12th November 2013 respectively.

As a result, Mr Chapman commissioned Ernst and Young to undertake an independent verification of the statistical data in the 2011/12 and 2012/13 Annual Reports along with 2013/14 data from the Office of the Small Business Commissioner.

The Ernst and Young report has found that certain statistical data contained in the 2011/12 and 2012/13 Annual Reports is inaccurate, along with certain statistical data collated in 2013/14.

Specifically, I am advised this data contained an overstatement of both the number of enquiries made to the Office of the Small Business Commissioner and reported success rates.

The Ernst and Young report also found data in the current system did not correlate with information which was produced and tabled in the 2011/12 and 2012/13 annual reports.

As a result of these independent findings, I note my predecessor and I have made statements to the house and provided information to the Legislative Council based on advice provided by the Office Small Business Commissioner, which has now been found to be inaccurate.

I refer the House to the tabled Ernst & Young report for the verifiable data.

The 2011/12 and 2012/13 Annual Reports will be amended to advise readers to make reference to the Ernst and Young report, which will be located with these annual reports on the Commissioner’s Website.

Mr Chapman has briefed the Auditor-General on this matter.

In addition, Mr Chapman has subsequently put a number of new procedures in place relating to data collection. This includes a process whereby the Commissioner must formally sign off each case determination based on a recommendation by the case officer.