

**We The People**  
Program 24  
Small Business



During the nineteenth and twentieth century's right up to 1987 miners would take a canary into the coal mine. Canaries are very susceptible to methane and carbon monoxide gases and would fall silent and die well before the gas affected the miners thus providing an early warning signal. So the metaphor was created where an event or a warning can act as the 'canary in the mine'. Interestingly a variation on this occurred on board the Titanic where there was still a crow's nest lookout point. On that fateful night with a calm sea and full moon the duty lookout warned the bridge of ice bergs ahead. The bridge ignored the early warning as they couldn't see the ice on the moonlit ocean. The rest is history and most have never heard of the lookouts name. Mores' the pity because Fred Fleet was a maritime canary too.

You may well ask what has all this got to do with democracy and freedom which is the subject of these narratives. Well a great deal at the moment and it has to do with small business especially on the Gold Coast. It's statistically true that small and medium business is the back bone of our country and small business in particular is a vital part of business life especially on the Gold Coast which is the home of small business. I don't think the government really cares at all because they like us being the world's quarry. More and more public servants are appointed to create more and more legislation and lay more and more responsibility on small business to be tax collectors and experts in work place health and safety and equal opportunity and relentlessly more. Really local, state and federal requirements are making it almost impossible for small and medium business to survive. This is madness on a scale only wayward unions, sycophants and idiots can accomplish and if you are a member of a militant or unreasonable union then shame on you as their actions are un-Australian.

Business doyens, Dunn and Bradstreet, report that small business failures jumped 48% in the December quarter last year with more pain to come. The federal governments answer was to give themselves a 40% pay increase which is just plain insulting. In the meantime local Gold Coast City Councillors enjoy a pay packet of about \$130,000 a year plus a car, huge superannuation and committee allowances and on and on it goes. Many of these lack lustre councillors are career councillors with insufficient understanding of how small business works. For all that, we end up with entrenched incompetency and in some cases plain stupidity. Many say that the national unemployment rate is probably about 7% rather than 5% and is kept artificially low through the cunning of a desperate and insensitive federal government. People are hurting and hurting badly and the fundamental driver of small business is in real trouble and to a large degree because we are over governed. Put simply Gold Coast small business is drowning in red tape with bureaucratically inflicted onerous responsibilities and cannot afford to meet all the utopian legislation invented by people who have never had a real job or felt the cold breath of real business risk.

Now to be fair there are other factors affecting small business including cash flow, internet sales, late debtors and a lack of planning but Queensland has just had its highest year of corporate insolvencies on record. There are just too many parasites feeding on small business and there is a growing belief we are sailing on an Italian cruise ship. The statisticians and the government tell us how wonderful the economy is however their view is like a person standing with one foot in a bucket of boiling water and the other foot in a bucket of ice cold water. Statistically the average of the two means the person's temperature is just fine and so the economy has never been better. Tell that to small business while the canary expires in the mine and we steam toward a sea of ice bergs at full speed. Common sense is no longer common, is it?

**Until next time this is Kent Bayley**