



Media Release

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GFC Demands Higher Standards for Australian Small Business Advisors

To coincide with the National Small Business Summit, Australia's peak body for small business advice, Business Enterprise Centres Australia, says while "national" standards provide an acceptable measure for business advisors, the post-GFC world will demand higher, "international" levels.

"We have an intelligent group of small business advisors who understand the grass roots issues facing small businesses in Australia," says BEC Australia chair, Peter Murray.

"Our challenge is to make sure we are helping small businesses be the best they can be to compete globally, especially in the wake of the GFC, which is why we are formalising our strategic alliance with the Australasian Institute of Enterprise Facilitators (AIEF).

"In a memorandum of understanding being signed in Melbourne today, BEC Australia officially takes responsibility for providing APEC program training for business advisors across Australia, and the AIEF confirms its role as the body providing accreditation. This training has been devised by an international panel of experts and ratified by Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation nations including Canada, Hong Kong, Singapore, and the USA.

"AIEF accreditation is giving small businesses even greater confidence in advice received through the BEC network because accredited advisors will have their experience formally acknowledged, they will be equipped through further business counselling courses, and will have to apply themselves to ongoing professional development.

"While it is vital that leaders like Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, and Opposition Leader, Malcolm Turnbull, address the national small business summit on 'major policy issues' in Melbourne this week, we believe the BEC Australia alliance with AIEF promises tangible outcomes for small business owners and will pay dividends to the national economy for generations to come," he says.

The agreement is due to commence on July 1, 2009 for an initial period of two years.

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BACKGROUND BEC AUSTRALIA INFORMATION FROM www.beca.org.au

Business Enterprise Centres operate throughout all states and territories in Australia endeavouring to work with and on behalf of the micro and small business sectors.

BECA Charter: -

BEC Australia is a not-for-profit organisation whose primary role is to support and grow the national network of Business Enterprise Centres and provide representation on behalf of its members to key stakeholders.

BECA Vision:-

A nationwide network of Business Enterprise Centres that are recognised as the first and best point of contact for small business operators seeking quality business information, advice and guidance.

BACKGROUND AUSTRALASIAN INSTITUTE OF ENTERPRISE FACILITATORS FROM www.aief.org.au

*The Australasian Institute of Enterprise Facilitators (AIEF) was founded in 1997 as a result of the recommendations of the Industry Task Force on Leadership and Management Skills. In their report, entitled *Enterprising Nation*, the taskforce recommended that "a comprehensive accreditation process be established for small business trainers, educators, counsellors, mentors and advisers so as to upgrade the quality of small business advice.*

The Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) program was developed by an international panel of experts. Its objective is to create a professional standard across APEC for the small business counselling industry. It was endorsed by APEC Small Business Ministers in 1997. It is recognised by Canada, Australia, Brunei, Darussalam, Chinese Taipei, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Korea, Malaysia, Mexico, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Russia, Singapore, Thailand and the USA.

On completion of the program business counsellors (including facilitators, advisers and consultants), gain international recognition of their status throughout APEC countries and gain professional membership of AIEF with nationally recognised professional status through use of the letters "MIEF".