

## QUESTION TIME

**Q** Is Labor serious about creating a thriving Australian-based government contracting industry that everyone can participate in, no matter what their capital base?

*Andrew Walker, founder and director, Aspen Medical*

**A** I announced a \$19.1 million suite of measures in July to give Australian industry, particularly small and medium enterprises, a fairer go at competing for contracts with government and its prime contractors. These focus on increasing awareness of Australian capabilities and on making local firms more competitive. An extra \$8.5 million will be provided to the Industry Capability Network to match capable and competitive Australian SMEs with opportunities in major projects. Australian Industry Participation plans, which require project proponents to show how they will provide Australian industry, particularly SMEs, with full, fair and reasonable opportunity to participate will be required for large (above \$20 million) tenders for commonwealth-funded infrastructure work.

*Kim Carr, Minister for Innovation, Industry, Science and Research*

**A** Procurement processes have undergone substantial reform under the Rudd government. SMEs won 37 per cent of all commonwealth contracts signed in 2007-08 (\$9.7 billion of a total \$26.4 billion). In July, we announced a new position of procurement co-ordinator to disseminate information on federal government procurement opportunities. Agencies are obliged to consider:

- The benefits of doing business with competitive Australian SMEs.
- The capability and commitment to regional markets of SMEs in their local regions.
- Supplier base and competitive benefits of access for new market entrants.

*Lindsay Tanner, Minister for Finance and Deregulation*

**Send questions for government and agencies to [questiontime@brw.com.au](mailto:questiontime@brw.com.au).**