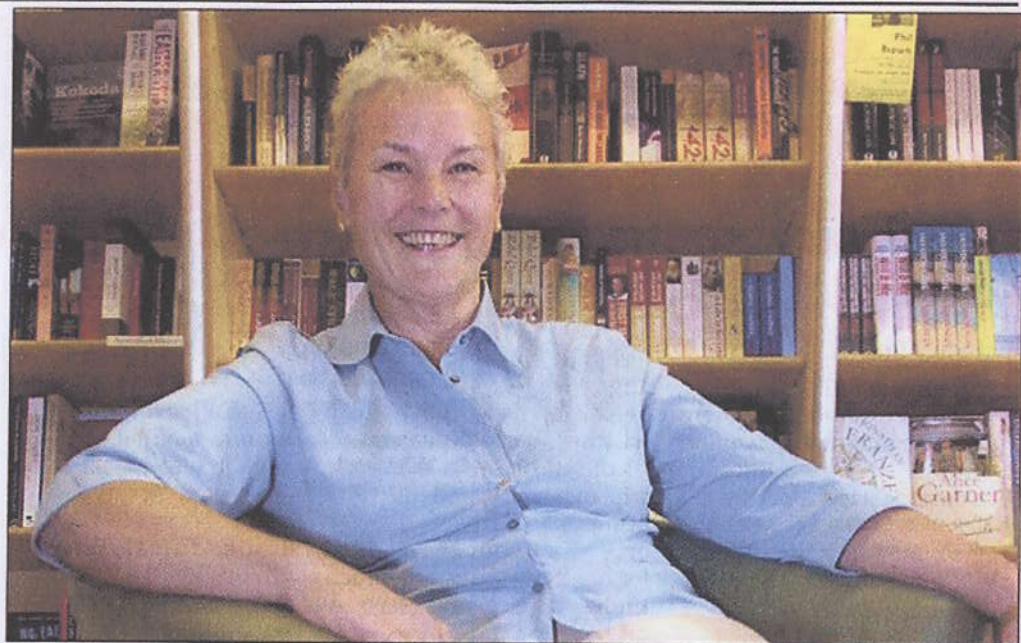




Chamber puts faith in wealth of experience

Penny Cutting is using her experience as a radiographer, ski lodge worker, restaurant manager, market researcher, airline worker, franchise owner and small-business mentor to good effect as the new president of the South-East Brisbane Chamber of Commerce. Andrew Graham spoke to her.



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■ Taking care of business ... new chamber of commerce president Penny Cutting.

SOUTH-EAST Brisbane Chamber of Commerce president Penny Cutting did not initially want the role.

"I thought it would be better served by somebody with a structured business behind them. I kept saying I'm just a one-man band.

"But the consensus was I'm the one who's out there and talks to people so I can be the front of the chamber, whereas someone who is in big business and sits behind a desk can't be."

As a mentor for small businesses, Ms Cutting is "out there" in the business community every day in the perfect position to push the chamber's barrow.

Her goals as president include

increasing the chamber numbers with a more diverse membership range.

"The chamber is only as good as its members and unless we have a broad spectrum of members, nobody is going to grow ... the people within it or the chamber."

There is no one better qualified to encourage a diversity of businesses than someone who has worked as a radiographer, ski lodge worker, market researcher, restaurant owner, airline employee and franchise owner in both Australia and the US.

Born and bred in Adelaide, Ms Cutting spread her wings when she journeyed to the US for a working holiday and liked what

she saw. "I was going for 18 months and stayed for 16 years."

Ms Cutting still believes America is the land of opportunity.

"I found that people in America were willing to give you a go on what they believed you could do, not from a piece of paper that said what you had done," she said.

Buoyed by that spirit of opportunity, the chamber's committee has endorsed a number of moves to increase numbers, including an expression of interest form for those wavering on membership.

Interested businesses can sign the form and discuss what the chamber can do for them with a committee member. They can

then attend one of the chamber's monthly breakfasts and see what happens.

"We're hoping that an expression of interest form might not be as threatening as a full-blown application form," she said.

Other innovations include a regular businesswomen's lunch, with the next meeting at Bulimba's Tonic restaurant on October 27, and the introduction of the Business Leaders of the Future program.

Under the program, members are encouraged to sponsor a Year 12 student to attend each breakfast and then introduce that student to industries that he or she is interested in joining in the future.

As an enticement to attend the monthly breakfast, the chamber invites a guest speaker to inform on commerce-related issues.

This year, Brisbane City councillor Graham Quirk discussed the North-South Bypass tunnel and Detective Senior Constable Rod Shelton elaborated on corporate fraud.

In December, Justin Albin from Commerce Queensland's business efficiency solutions team will discuss water savings in business.

Ms Cutting said: "Going into the new year, it's important for members to understand what's going to be expected of them. It's an education we need to provide to our members."