

Secrets of success from those in the know

By John Thistleton
Business Editor

Working mothers as well as businessmen and women who started their ventures in areas as diverse as tinkering with cars or selling wine will share the secrets of their success at a seminar in Canberra tomorrow.

The small-business seminar aims to continue Canberra's dramatic change from a public-sector town to a private-sector one, by helping more people into new ventures.

Mother-of-two Kate Sykes, who established a national online job classifieds website connecting skilled mothers to employers who under-

stand the balance of work and family, and prominent Canberra businessman Jim Murphy, will be among a panel of presenters.

The seminar's facilitator, Robert Hartnett, began his career in his family's car repair business, then filled sales and marketing roles in the corporate world before establishing Business Performance International and becoming a successful author of books on business.

ACT director of organisers of the event CPA Australia Margaret Beerworth said it was widely known 60 per cent of Canberrans were employed in the private sector and 40 per cent in the public sector. "What is not widely recognised is

that of approximately 60 per cent employed in the private sector, 88 per cent are in businesses of fewer than five employees and 96 per cent in businesses with fewer than 20 employees," she said.

There were huge opportunities in the ACT, many created by people leaving the public sector, establishing themselves as consultants and contracting back to government agencies.

Ms Sykes worked in the IT, finance and government sectors in Canberra, Sydney and abroad before setting up www.careermums.com.au.

Mrs Beerworth said like many others starting in business, Ms Sykes was innovative, confident and a great

example of someone working with an accountant to develop a sound business case.

More than 150 people have booked for the seminar at the National Library of Australia in Parkes tomorrow night.

"People will relate well to stories and be inspired and pick up good tips. They can also talk one-on-one with the speakers," Mrs Beerworth said.

Mr Hartnett said an explosion in mergers and acquisitions over the past decade had created a need for people to take charge of their direction and either start or expand their own businesses. Understanding why a person was

going into business, what they hoped to achieve and in what direction they were headed, was essential.

The author of Sensis's most recent marketing and advertising book, *Small Business, Big Opportunity*, Mr Hartnett advocated planning before taking the plunge into a new venture.

A good example was a former chief financial officer and general manager of a corporation with 250 staff who planned his departure from the organisation for eight years and started afresh in a Gloria Jeans Coffees franchise.

That solid planning foundation would likely lead to the new franchisee quickly expanding to two or three new outlets in a short time.