

Entrepreneur Russo fights back as contract pulled from Bundaberg

# Job-finder roles saved

**exclusive**

**By Janette Young**

Senior Journalist

THIRTY staff at the Sarina Russo Job Access centre in Bundaberg will be told today that their own jobs are safe despite missing out on a crucial government contract to place the unemployed.

The entrepreneur is fighting back despite half of her 20 Queensland centres failing to win federal government Job Services Australia contracts.

"We are not closing Bundaberg," she said.

"We are revving up and we are going to serve job seekers."

The news ends an anxious

time for staff at the Woongarra Street centre, managed by Gordon King for nine years.

Yesterday, he said: "The future is looking bright."

The company had said 11 Queensland offices — including Bundaberg — would close as a result of what is being labelled a "bungled" tender process for jobs service contracts, which replace Job Network operations from July 1.

It has outraged charities, which have also lost contracts and will lose jobs.

The Australian Services Union is staging a national day of protest tomorrow and the opposition wants a senate inquiry into the tenders.

Yesterday, Miss Russo said

if the Bundaberg branch of Job Access did not have the official contract for the job search program in the region her company would offer a "free market" service.

"We are encouraging employers to continue using our services," she said.

"Let the job-seeker decide."

She added: "We will 'future our enterprise' as unemployment continues to rise and we're confident we can stand on our record and not just survive, but to grow so we can continue to help people find jobs and training."

The news that her organisation had missed out on Queensland contracts had

been devastating.

"It was very, very painful, and I said (to staff) 'Don't give up on me'," she said.

While the Salvation Army has been hit hard as a Job Network provider nationally, Tom Osborne — local community services manager for Bundaberg's Tom Quinn Centre — said the local employment operation was only an "end user" and would work with any placement provider.



**JUST THE JOB:** Sarina Russo Bundaberg team members will continue to provide their service, from left, Gordon King, Betty Lappin, Doug Mitchell, Ken Watton, Jo Gordon, Carmel Dittko, Tanya McCrea, Kerry Mackie, Kandice Fielding-Huth, Kylie Marner, Chontelle Mallie, Rose Jurgens, Bronwyn Quaile, Helen Lander, Tanyia Mimi and Leandro Fletcher.

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