

Mark Bouris fronts our version of The Apprentice

You're hired



Perfect choice:
The new boss of
The Apprentice
Mark Bouris

Picture: Angelo
Soulas

By RICHARD CLUNE

"YOU'RE fired!" It's a phrase millionaire businessman Mark Bouris admits he has used before and one he will now say every week as "boss" of the Australian version of *The Apprentice*.

Last week, Bouris confirmed to *The Sunday Telegraph* that he would front the Channel Nine reality series, which begins production this week.

Although it is based on the successful US and UK versions fronted by tycoons Donald Trump and Sir Alan Sugar, Bouris said the local format would be less ostentatious and maintain a quintessential Australian feel.

"Trump's pretty fast ... he's not my go," said Bouris, who also differs from Trump in that he still enjoys his own head of hair.

"I'm not one of those boys who like to show off their toys and I don't think it's the right time to be doing that. I think it's a bit insensitive.

"I'm the son of a migrant, brought up in the western suburbs, and I reckon that I'll bring a distinctive Australian flavour to the show."

The 10-part series, produced by Fremantle Media Australia, will screen later this year. The winning contestant will secure a "senior position" at Bouris's financial-services firm, Yellow Brick Road, and will be paid a handsome "six-figure salary."

Nine will begin a call for contestants on the show this week. Bouris, meanwhile, described his ultimate candidate



Too fast: US tycoon Donald Trump

as strong but "more importantly" also empathic — adding also that he can be a tough boss. Bouris made his money, and a name for himself, as the creator and face of Wizard Home Loans.

With Aussie Home Loans' John Symond, he was responsible for taking on the big banks in the 1990s, ultimately helping to slash mortgage rates.

Bouris sold Wizard to GE Money in 2004 for \$500 million and launched Yellow Brick Road in 2007. Nine chief executive David Gyngell described Bouris as the "perfect choice" for The

Australian *Apprentice*. He said: "We'll be giving a group of aspiring professionals the chance to be exposed to one of the country's best businessmen.

"Mark's tough and aggressive, with mountains of integrity."

Bouris said the show was relevant for these economic times in that it offered hope in many ways.

"Hope for people who get the job but also those people watching it," he said.

"That's why people are watching TV: everything else is pretty crappy outside. I'm chuffed to be able to participate in that environment. This is about getting a fair-dinkum job for people who want it and for people who are going to compete for it in the right spirit."

Bouris said he didn't care if contestants were young or old, male or female, university educated, or not.

"It's not about that," he said. "It's about a matrix of things, not one particular thing. What got me interested is people's personalities and their characters, and how they try to sell themselves."

Bouris said there was a possible catchphrase that might just make its way into the show ... a well-known expression the staff used at Wizard: "You're going to cop a Bourising."

"I learned about that a few years after I'd sold the business. It meant you'd get a fairly heavy dressing-down."



Ask Mark Bouris
Page 119