



Speech by

**Mr S. ROBERTSON**

**MEMBER FOR SUNNYBANK**

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Hansard 11 November 1999

### **GOODS AND SERVICES TAX**

**Mr ROBERTSON** (Sunnybank—ALP) (10.20 a.m.): Last Friday, I chaired a meeting of the Queensland Small Business Advisory Council. A major and ongoing agenda item is the Federal Government's funding of the GST information assistance program, particularly as it applies to small business.

On 28 October, representing the Deputy Premier, I also attended the Small Business Ministerial Summit in Darwin. The Federal Minister responsible for small business, the Honourable Peter Reith, chaired that meeting. At that summit, I argued strongly that the funding was simply not adequate, given the vast numbers and the decentralised nature of small businesses in Queensland, and the additional burden of including charities and non-profit organisations that was not envisaged when the funding was first promised. Federal Treasurer Costello, who expects compliance from day one, has said no to an appropriate level of funding for information and assistance for small business. Mr Reith was obviously under strict instructions from his colleague the Treasurer to refuse any requests for fair treatment of small business.

The original funding was calculated on the basis of no exemptions and before the deal was done with the Democrats. What was arguably inadequate before is now clearly just not enough. Not only is it not enough, it is also misdirected and will not reach the majority of small businesses in Queensland.

The Federal Government proposes that funding for the education and training of small business will be made available only through industry associations. Queensland told the Federal Minister that that proposition was flawed. We were supported in this by other State members of the summit, including members of Liberal and coalition Governments in other States.

Through the Office of Small Business, the State Government has allocated some \$300,000 for the development of an educational awareness program to assist small business. It is estimated that a further \$2m is required to make sure that we are able properly to complement the proposed Federal program—filling the gaps in their delivery. At that summit, Queensland made the point that any support by industry associations should complement the role undertaken by the State Government so that as many businesses as possible can be reached before 1 July 2000.

The Queensland Small Business Advisory Council believes that many small businesses will not be ready on 1 July 2000 and supports the view that the industry association delivery, as currently planned with the funding available, will not effectively capture small business operators in this State.

Time expired.

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