



Speech by

Hon. Rod Welford

MEMBER FOR EVERTON

Hansard Tuesday, 9 October 2007

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Small Business

Hon. RJ WELFORD (Everton—ALP) (Minister for Education and Training and Minister for the Arts) (10.25 am): Small business is a real driver of the Queensland economy. It represents almost 97 per cent of all private sector business in the state and employs more than 610,000 Queenslanders. In March this year, as part of our government's \$1 billion Queensland Skills Plan, I launched the Small Business Solutions initiative to provide Queensland's small business owners with greater training support to boost their skills and grow their businesses. This is a key initiative of our \$1 billion Skills Plan because of the significant contribution the small business sector makes to our economy.

Queensland is the only state in Australia where small business owners can access mentoring and receive formal qualifications in business management at the same time through this unique service. In the first seven months of its operation, I am pleased to report to the House, more than 250 Queensland small businesses have now been receiving mentoring and advice through the Small Business Solutions initiative. Business owners who have used the mentoring service have reported a range of highly successful results, with many experiencing immediate improvement to their bottom line. The service has been designed to help small businesses in selling, industrial relations, profit, loss and business growth, marketing and sales, human resource management, computer skills and business planning. It makes use of experts, mentors and successful small business managers to deliver a one-on-one, peer-to-peer business based mentoring service. This is not a service just for 'struggling' small businesses but rather it is here to help small to medium enterprises to grow in productivity and increase their profitability.

Some businesses have found the initiative so helpful that they have signed up for further mentoring. Of the original clients, 15 per cent have reregistered for additional mentoring. The initiative, which initially focused on Brisbane, has now expanded into Townsville and the Gold Coast and will roll out statewide within the next 12 months. It is not only small businesses that have recognised the success of the Small Business Solutions initiative. The project has also won the 2007 Australian Marketing Institute Queensland division award for marketing excellence in the education category. It will go on to vie for a national award in Sydney on 18 October. I am sure members join me in wishing the Small Business Solutions team all the best in the national awards.