




Speech By
Hon. Shannon Fentiman

MEMBER FOR WATERFORD

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Budget, Small Business

 **Hon. SM FENTIMAN** (Waterford—ALP) (Minister for Employment and Small Business and Minister for Training and Skills Development) (9.49 am): The Queensland budget backs small business. With the release of the first ever small business budget statement, we are signalling to small and medium businesses across Queensland that we recognise that they are the engine room of our strong economy. The small business budget statement will be essential reading for the more than 6,000 participants in our recent Queensland Small Business Week.

The range of support on offer has been very warmly received. The Chamber of Commerce & Industry welcomed the focus on small business, saying—

... this budget acknowledged that it is small business that grows Queensland's economy, and we saw this reflected in the priority given to small business in the budget papers handed down today.

The CCIQ also recognised how our \$45 billion infrastructure budget will support 38,000 Queensland jobs every year, powering apprenticeship and traineeship opportunities in small business. That is not all. This week's budget also confirmed our ongoing support for our apprentice and trainee payroll tax rebate. This \$26 million initiative will support the employment of more than 26,000 apprentices and trainees in the coming year. We want to encourage growing small and medium businesses to take on apprentices and reduce their business costs at the same time.

Work to provide incentives such as this was described as an 'excellent decision' by Nick Behrens and a 'winner' by BDO. Why? Like this government, they know that it works. The latest figures from the National Centre for Vocational Education Research show that in Queensland commencement numbers of apprentices and trainees are up by 8.5 per cent while the nationwide number fell by 1.7 per cent. Queensland is bucking the national trend, because we are putting in place the measures to promote apprenticeships and traineeships.

Although Queensland is leading the nation, we still want to do more. We want to continue to grow that number and continue to support apprentices and trainees through to the completion of their training. To do this, we need to partner with industry. That is why last month, at Airlie Beach Welding and Fabrication, along with the Premier I announced our \$1 million Advancing Apprentices Fund. This fund will enable the Palaszczuk government to partner with industry to encourage more people into apprenticeships and, most importantly, give them the support to complete their apprenticeships. I am looking forward to working with industry groups and business at the upcoming Advancing Apprentices round tables to generate greater interest among Queenslanders in taking up apprenticeships and traineeships.