




Speech By
Hon. Shannon Fentiman

MEMBER FOR WATERFORD

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Floods, Small Business

 **Hon. SM FENTIMAN** (Waterford—ALP) (Minister for Employment and Small Business and Minister for Training and Skills Development) (10.02 am): So many Townsville residents have been hit hard by the recent flooding, but it makes it even harder when your business is affected as well. When I visited Townsville last week to meet with small business owners at our Small Business Recovery Centre, I heard stories of a cafe owner having to strip the fit-out he had completed only six months ago.

I heard of small business owners looking out for their community. One pharmacy owner was still taking calls from customers as they were mopping up and throwing out stock. He said, 'When your business is looking after people, why would we stop now?'

At the Small Business Recovery Centre I met with Michael, who had not only lost his home to flooding; his auto recycling business on Ingham Road had also been hit hard. He was most worried about getting back to full trade for the sake of his staff. It was everyone around him he was most worried about. I was genuinely moved by his concern for his family and his staff. I met with Sal from Lancini Group that operate Fairfield Central Shopping Centre. Sal said the support shown by the state government has been exemplary and that we had a great team of people assembled providing support for business.

Trying to overcome all the hurdles in order to reopen one's business can be a daunting experience. There is insurance, cleaning up, replacing fixtures and stock, and looking after staff, clients and customers. I am pleased to say that the Small Business Recovery Centre is there to support our small businesses at every hurdle.

Already the centre has assisted more than 250 small business owners—people like Jenna, the owner of TalkHQ Speech Pathology, whose home and business were both flooded. Jenna's business employs 20 people and these fantastic staff have helped her with finding a temporary place of business. She could not speak more highly of the assistance she has received from the community and our Small Business Recovery Centre.

While at the centre I heard about the importance of cash flow for small business during the recovery effort and the impact delays in insurance assessments were having on allowing businesses to plan their recovery. We have heard this message and we have acted. To better support small business in this situation we have made clear the way our category C small business grants can help. The initial \$5,000 component of this grant is available for small businesses even if their insurer is yet to decide their cover. They need to get this assistance quickly to get moving and to get their doors open. This provides some immediate cash flow relief for small businesses waiting on their insurance assessments and allows them to get on with the clean-up and recovery.

We know the recovery process will be long, but we will be there with them every step of the way. We all want to rebuild this vibrant and important sector and get Townsville and North Queensland's economy bouncing back to long-term growth.