




Speech By
Hon. Shannon Fentiman

MEMBER FOR WATERFORD

Record of Proceedings, 22 October 2019

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Floods, Recovery Assistance

 **Hon. SM FENTIMAN** (Waterford—ALP) (Minister for Employment and Small Business and Minister for Training and Skills Development) (10.07 am): The Palaszczuk government is committed to supporting all small businesses that were impacted by the devastating floods. More than six months on we are still there on the ground assisting businesses that need a helping hand. We know that supporting local businesses will help create more local jobs. Despite the floods in February, Townsville's unemployment rate is more than two per cent lower than it was a year ago. That would not be possible without the continued support on the ground following these devastating floods.

I am proud that already we have approved over 650 Special Disaster Assistance Recovery Grants to small businesses, providing over \$9 million in funding. During Small Business Week I announced an additional \$10 million support package to help small businesses with longer term recovery and building business resilience.

The Small Business Recovery Centre in Townsville continues to provide support. However, I am excited to announce a new initiative that takes the recovery centre on the road. Our Back on Track bus has hit the road this week to provide assistance to businesses that need it most in Western Queensland with our mobile outreach teams. Between late October and early December the Back on Track bus will deliver support and information direct to recovering small businesses across 16 locations hit hardest by these floods. We know how busy these business owners are so we are coming to them. We are connecting them with experts to help them with their recovery so that they are ready to face any future disasters. This includes information on loans and grants, disaster preparation and, importantly, mental health support.

We have also announced our new Small Business Recovery and Resilience Champion, Ben Vering, who will be on the ground working with locals to hear their stories and develop strategies on how we can continue to support local small businesses. Ben has spent most of his career working for small business, particularly in the regions, and he recently served as the CEO of the Townsville Business Development Centre. Providing the right support and assistance not only during times of disaster but also for the long recovery is vital to continuing job growth in our regions. Small businesses are the lifeblood of our regional communities, and we are committed to supporting their recovery because we know that when businesses get back up and running so does the community.