




Speech By
Hon. Shannon Fentiman

MEMBER FOR WATERFORD

Record of Proceedings, 19 May 2020

MATTER OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Coronavirus, Small Business

 **Hon. SM FENTIMAN** (Waterford—ALP) (Minister for Employment and Small Business and Minister for Training and Skills Development) (2.30 pm): In the face of the biggest health crisis in a generation, Queenslanders have stepped up and, overwhelmingly, have followed government health directives. Of course, now the government has to act to address the other crisis, the economic crisis, and do everything within our power to protect and restore jobs right across Queensland.

The Palaszczuk government has now announced over \$6 billion in stimulus to support industry, households and our health sector, and key to getting Queenslanders working again is supporting our small businesses. We know that they are the engine room of our state's economy and are responsible for employing close to one million Queenslanders. As a government committed to delivering jobs, we are also committed to supporting our small businesses.

To date we have delivered a comprehensive package to support our small businesses. This includes payroll tax relief, which has put around \$360 million back into the accounts of thousands of Queensland businesses. Our \$1 billion in interest-free loans has assisted over 3,600 businesses, and that number is continuing to grow. We have also provided support to over 6,000 small businesses through our Small Business Hotline, which includes free mentoring and free financial counselling.

However, we know that what a lot of small businesses need right now is that much needed cash flow. Building upon that work, I was so pleased to see the Premier announce today a \$100 million support package for our small businesses. They can now apply for grants of up to \$10,000 that will provide much needed assistance to help them counter the impact of COVID-19. The new grants program has been developed to support those small businesses forced into hibernation or those that have experienced a significant impact as a result of the pandemic. These grants can be used for professional advice or services such as marketing or social media as well as specialised digital equipment or software. This will be very helpful for businesses right now, especially as we are seeing many of them having to transition, do business differently and get their operations online. No matter what these businesses need in order to keep going and to keep people in jobs, we will back them.

Jessy Cameron, the owner of Molten Store in Fortitude Valley, actually opened her brand-new store on the day the pandemic was declared. Jessy has said that a COVID grant would go a long way to helping her business increase their online operations and look at new ways of running her business. She said that she was growing before the pandemic and she wants to get back to a situation where there is growth again in her business, and this will help her do that.

Taj Pabari from Fiftysix Creations was another small business quick to welcome the government's new grants. Of course the Chamber of Commerce & Industry Queensland's general manager, Amanda Rohan, also welcomed our announcement saying that the grants will provide 'much needed immediate cash support to Queensland's small businesses'. National Retail Association CEO

Dominique Lamb said that retailers are appreciative of any help during the current turmoil. She said, 'The fate of thousands of Queensland small businesses continues to hang in the balance and all support is welcomed.'

The package announced today will also include \$4 million for much needed training, which will help small business owners and also their staff to upskill and reskill now as we begin our road to recovery. This is something that the sector has called for and I am very pleased we are able to deliver. This is all part of the Palaszczuk government's planned approach to our economic recovery and will play a vital role in kickstarting Queensland's economy post COVID.

With May being Small Business Month, I also want to remind everyone to continue to 'support small' and support their local small businesses. It was wonderful on the weekend in my community and in Logan to see so many residents supporting their local cafes and businesses, and I encourage them to continue to support them during this time. Our Queensland small businesses support so many Queenslanders in terms of jobs, so it is now time that we get behind them and help them recover. By supporting our local small businesses, by supporting small, we are supporting Queensland jobs. It has been wonderful to join with CCIQ to launch our #supportsmall campaign. I would urge all members of the House to continue to 'support small' during the month of May and to continue to do so during our economic recovery in the months ahead.