



Speech By  
**Brent Mickelberg**


**MEMBER FOR BUDERIM**

---

Record of Proceedings, 26 May 2022

**PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENT**

**Business Basics Grant Program**

 **Mr MICKELBERG** (Buderim—LNP) (2.13 pm): What a mess the Business Basics grant program turned out to be. First the website crashed minutes after going live. Then two weeks later the website opened again but, despite the assurances of the Minister for Small Business, things just got worse. Small business owners logged on at the time advised by the state government—9 am—only to find a virtual queue. It turns out that the online queue had been created without being advertised, putting thousands of small business owners at a disadvantage from the outset.

It begs the question: was there preferential treatment for some small business owners? Were some businesses told but not others? Because of that queue, the grant allocation was exhausted within two hours—two hours. Anyone halfway through their application was simply cut off.

My phone blew up and my email blew up. I know that many of my LNP colleagues were also getting calls from upset businesses in their electorates, as were electorates like Pine Rivers and Bulimba. I am sure more than one Labor backbencher was on the receiving end of some angry emails from small business owners that I was cced into—like the member for Bancroft and the member for Ipswich West. Small business owners were and still are angry, disheartened and confused by this dodgy process.

Claire from Buderim told me that she was not after a guarantee of receiving a grant; she just wanted a fair go to achieve it. She wanted to submit her application after spending weeks of planning and have it considered. Sarah from Ipswich got in touch. She said that she has a struggling small business and is the sole money earner for her family. She said grants like this are vital, not just for her business but for her family who rely on the growth of her business.

There are many stories like these—of struggling small businesses who just wanted a fair go—many who barely survived the pandemic lockdowns and more recently the widespread flooding. They desperately needed these grants to rebuild but, as usual, this government is all about the photo-op and it forgets about the follow-up. The minister dropped the ball, and it is small businesses who pay the price.

This is not the first time that a business grants program has been bungled. This is the fourth one and they have all been bungled. Business support was sluggish to be rolled out during the lockdowns and border closures and, to be fair, it was totally inadequate. Many small businesses did not qualify for financial support despite being the ones who needed it most.

This state government needs to take a long hard look at the process it uses to roll out support to businesses across Queensland because it is not working. Small business owners deserve better than to spend months preparing an application just to have it disregarded because the process and the website is not up to scratch. The minister owes it to small businesses—maybe her employer in years to come—to do better.