



Speech By
Hon. Leanne Linard

MEMBER FOR NUDGE

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Multiculturalism, Small Business

 **Hon. LM LINARD** (Nudgee—ALP) (Minister for Children and Youth Justice and Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (10.12 am): Queensland is one of the most culturally diverse places in the world. Queenslanders from all backgrounds have helped shape our state and contribute to our future. Cultural diversity is one of our greatest strengths as a state and as a country. It supports our diverse economy, particularly through the countless small businesses run by Queenslanders from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

As everyone in this chamber knows, small businesses are the backbone of Queensland's economy, and indeed nationwide, with 97 per cent of Queensland's businesses being small business. Migrant small business owners make a significant contribution, with national data showing one in three Australian small businesses are owned by migrants. These small business owners have also helped to revitalise Queensland's regional communities and connect us on a global scale. Small business continues to be a key focus for our government as we seek to help build inclusive, connected and thriving communities for all.

As the Minister for Multicultural Affairs, one of my priorities has been to work with my colleague, Minister Di Farmer, and support the Department of Employment, Small Business and Training's Mentoring for Growth program which is celebrating its 20th year of operation in 2022. We are proud to support this program, which gives small business owners free access to business experts to discuss a range of business issues tailored specifically to their needs.

With the help of our incredible network of community service providers and leaders in the multicultural community, we have assisted the Department of Employment, Small Business and Training to connect with culturally diverse communities. They are recruiting, training, and developing mentors to join their team of more than 300 small business experts from across the state.

We know people from migrant or refugee backgrounds can face additional barriers to starting and operating small businesses. We know that better access to information, networking and local market knowledge can be their keys to success. Our vision is for migrant or refugee small business owners in Queensland to step out onto a level playing field alongside the broader small business sector. We want to ensure they have every opportunity to succeed.

Through our work, we have been able to better understand the barriers and the opportunities migrant small business owners face. We also want to learn how the Mentoring for Growth program can continue to benefit them even more, both as a mentor and mentees.

I had the pleasure last week of opening the Multicultural Small Business Expo in Brisbane for my colleague, Minister Farmer. I heard incredible stories from migrants who, through hard work and perseverance, have established successful businesses in Queensland, and I met with proud mentors who are participating in the Mentoring for Growth program. This included Pushpa who has been a

mentor for fourteen years. They are now proudly making valuable contributions to the community and our economy by providing employment opportunities, sharing their rich heritage and supporting other small business owners from around the world.

As just one initiative supporting small businesses in Queensland, I have no doubt the Mentoring for Growth program will continue to have a positive impact on many small businesses, including those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. I look forward to continuing to work alongside my colleague, Minister Farmer, to make sure that they can reach their potential.