




Speech By
Hon. Yvette D'Ath

MEMBER FOR REDCLIFFE

Record of Proceedings, 29 March 2022

SMALL BUSINESS COMMISSIONER BILL

 **Hon. YM D'ATH** (Redcliffe—ALP) (Minister for Health and Ambulance Services) (3.20 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the Small Business Commissioner Bill 2021, which was introduced by the Minister for Employment and Small Business and Minister for Training and Skills Development to this chamber last year. First, I would like to thank the Queensland Small Business Commissioner for the work the commissioner has done to date following the temporary establishment of her office. I would also like to note that the commissioner herself has run a small business in my electorate of Redcliffe. I met her many years ago—I think around 2007 or 2008—when she had just moved out of her garage to start a small business in her local community in a shopfront. I am so glad that she knows the community very well and is very supportive of small businesses in the community and, of course, is a champion herself and has been a mentor to many small businesses across Queensland.

We know that small businesses account for 97 per cent of all Queensland businesses and the small business sector plays a key role in Queensland's economy. It is important that we protect small businesses in our state as they are a valuable part of our communities. We also know that our small businesses have done it tough over the past two years due to the pandemic. I want to thank them for their continued support of their communities and I also thank the community for supporting them.

In Redcliffe we have a number of great small businesses going about their business each and every day to support their community and provide employment. On behalf of our entire community I want to say thank you. While time does not permit me to thank each and every one of them individually, I know that our community is supportive of them.

We know that it is hard for small business owners who just get up each day to open their doors and keep their business running and often do not have the time to worry about what legislative changes or policies are happening at any level of government and what they need to be aware of, but we know that the decisions we make in this chamber can make a real difference to their business. I want to take this opportunity to acknowledge the work of the Redcliffe Chamber of Commerce in my community who represent small businesses in my local area. They provide an invaluable avenue for our business leaders to meet, swap stories and learnings and make connections to upskill and support their businesses.

The establishment of a permanent Queensland Small Business Commissioner and supporting office will provide important resources, advocacy and dispute resolution services to Queensland small businesses. This bill brings Queensland in line with other jurisdictions and was an election commitment of the Palaszczuk Labor government at the 2020 election. The temporary office was established in May 2020 to provide support to small businesses impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and has already been providing key resources in relation to the pandemic and more recently this year's devastating floods which impacted so many businesses across the state, in particular, in South-East Queensland.

I, like many members, have spent days and weeks out with our communities after the devastating floods and weather events in recent weeks. The rain this week I know will bring back memories for so many. I know that there were some small businesses in my area that were also impacted, and we need to make sure that both as a government and as a local community we are supporting these businesses as they recover.

My constituents of Redcliffe are truly remarkable and rallied round each other in the wake of the recent floods and weather event. This includes a number of small businesses donating their time, expertise and products to help their fellow community members, and for that I say thank you. While there are many small businesses that helped during the floods, I take this opportunity to thank Trina from Breathe Easy Cafe for donating over 350 personally made meals to those that were in emergency accommodation after the floods and who also raised \$2,165.55 and donated it to the mighty team at Chameleon Youth Housing to continue their invaluable work for our community of finding homes for people.

I want to thank Chris from Hakuna Ma'Coffee who cooked all of the food at our recent flood community event on Saturday which I held to say thank you to the community for pulling together and supporting each other during the floods. These are just two examples of remarkable small businesses in our Redcliffe community that I have no doubt have been doing it tough—I know that Breathe Easy Cafe only started six months ago—but have gone above and beyond to give back to the community. They have not only provided a tremendous service but supported their community at their time of need. On behalf of our community, I say thank you.

I turn to some of the elements of the bill before the House today. Sometimes small businesses require assistance negotiating or in relation to disputes with their landlords or other agencies. Access to private legal advice and consultation can sometimes be an expensive and difficult thing to navigate. This bill will allow the Queensland Small Business Commissioner to provide alternative dispute resolution services and mediation services for retail shop leasing disputes. The Queensland Small Business Commissioner will also be a key component in facilitating the exchange of information between parties. The commissioner and supporting office will essentially be a central point of contact for Queensland small businesses in relation to matters that affect them.

Where disputes cannot be resolved through mediation, the Queensland Small Business Commissioner can refer matters to the relevant tribunal and/or court jurisdictions. The Palaszczuk government recognises that small businesses should be able to receive support from government when needed. The Queensland Small Business Commissioner will provide this much needed support following a tough couple of years for the sector and will drive productivity and advocacy for small business owners across Queensland. When small businesses thrive, our economy grows. I commend the bill to the House.