




Speech By
Jennifer Howard

MEMBER FOR IPSWICH

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ADJOURNMENT

Ipswich Business Excellence Awards

 **Ms HOWARD** (Ipswich—ALP) (7.22 pm): Ipswich loves a celebration. A few Saturdays ago the city rolled out the red carpet for our successful businesses at the Ipswich Region Chamber of Commerce 2023 Business Excellence Awards. It was fantastic to see an amazing line-up of local businesses, big and small, recognised for their achievements and outstanding contributions to Ipswich commerce. I want to acknowledge all of the finalists in each of the award categories and take a moment to congratulate some of the winners on the night: River 94.9 FM for Business of the Year Award; Matt Bull Window Tinting for Small Business of the Year Award; Jason Hannay from Imbibis Craft Distillery who won Business Person of the Year Award; Luke Frederick from Quest Ipswich who won Young Business Person of the Year; and Marty Branigan, Bank of Queensland Winston Glades, who won the President's Award. They are just the big winners of the night. I want to congratulate all of the winners throughout the night. They are testament to the innovation, hard work and dedication that drives the success of Ipswich's local business community.

Running a business in Ipswich can be challenging, but I am inspired every day by the energy and resourcefulness of our local business community. There are over 10,600 businesses in Ipswich, the majority of which are small businesses. No-one understands our community better than small business. They provide that personalised customer service that Ipswich people appreciate and support. The Ipswich community has been there to support our local businesses in the face of major challenges over the years, such as the COVID pandemic and the 2022 floods as well as the 2011 floods—I remember how much that affected our local businesses.

Nothing makes me more proud than being part of a Queensland Labor government that backs our small businesses all the way. Since 2015, the Palaszczuk government has set up a range of initiatives designed to help Queensland businesses succeed. Last year we appointed a permanent Small Business Commissioner, who provided advocacy and support for Queensland small businesses. At the beginning of the COVID pandemic, our government delivered the Small Business COVID-19 Adaption Grant, which supported local small businesses during the tough lockdown phase of the pandemic.

Our disaster recovery grants to businesses in 2022 were essential in helping our flood-affected businesses get back on their feet. We reformed our payroll tax system to provide payroll tax cuts to more than 12,000 small- to medium-sized businesses with payrolls under \$10.4 million. We have guaranteed the continuing funding of the successful Mentoring for Growth program, now in its 21st year. Last year we invested \$6.75 million in the Small Business Wellness Package, which provides support and links wellness coaches with small businesses that have been hit hard by the pandemic and by the recent floods. This year we are delivering cost-of-living relief to eligible small businesses, with a \$650 rebate on their power bills. We have recently rolled out the Queensland Business Energy Saving and Transformation program that will provide rebates of up to \$12,500 for eligible small businesses to install energy-efficient equipment. When we support our small business community we create a thriving economy that supports jobs, innovation and trade opportunities.