

Question on Notice
No. 493
Asked on 30 March 2006

MR McNAMARA asked the Minister for Small Business, Information Technology Policy and Multicultural Affairs (MR CUMMINS) —

QUESTION:

What is the Department of State Development doing to increase the management skills of small business owners in the electorate of Hervey Bay?

ANSWER:

I thank the Member for his question and for his strong support for small business within his electorate. The Beattie Government recognises that small business represents 96.5% of all Queensland businesses and employs around 50% of all private sector workers, and as such, this Government is committed to driving economic growth and innovation, developing business and industry and securing employment opportunities for Queenslanders.

The Beattie Government through the Department of State Development develops strategies to address the rapidly changing needs of small business and strengthen the role of business as the primary generator of employment.

These strategies include:

- improving the level of management skills of business owners and operators to empower business to respond quickly and positively to rapidly changing market forces;
- increasing awareness about new and improved technologies and providing specific programs to encourage the adoption of these technologies;
- encouraging businesses to become globally competitive, providing the necessary export development skills, and identifying and assisting access to overseas markets; and
- promoting the concept of entrepreneurship.

The Department actively seeks to promote and support small businesses through a range of business assistance and skills development initiatives offered through a state-wide network of State Development Centres.

The Hervey Bay electorate lies within the region serviced by State Development Centres in Maryborough and Hervey Bay, which cover four distinct geographic areas: Hervey Bay, Maryborough, Cooloola and the South Burnett.

Services and programs offered through these centres include:

- facilitation of *SmartLicence* applications (*SmartLicence* is the Department's one-stop-shop for business registration and licensing requirements);
- dissemination of business information and business self help tools;

- one-on-one business consultations, assisting with business start-ups, business planning, investment attraction, adoption of new technologies and domestic and overseas market expansion; and
- workshops, seminars, forums and networking sessions covering small business management skills development, e-Commerce, women in business, industry cluster facilitation, enhancement of manufacturing capability and export development.

Officers from State Development Centres in Maryborough and Hervey Bay work closely with local businesses to provide a range of services and programs to assist in the development of management skills. Since 1 July 2005 to 31 March 2006 include the:

- delivery of 25 small business workshops and seminars to 237 participants; including 4 industry specific workshops and forums to 81 participants;
- provision of information to 1,055 requests for small business assistance;
- provision of 11 grants totalling \$179,732 to business and industry under the Queensland Industry Development Scheme, the Small Business Accelerator Program; and
- provision of 760 significant one-on-one business consultations.

Other assistance services provided include the delivery of online services to small business through the Smart Small Business website (www.smartsmallbusiness.qld.gov.au), which is the most comprehensive website for small business in Australia, and offers a range of Queensland Government services such as *SmartLicence Online*, *Smart Skills Online* and the *Steps to Growth* program. These services are being expanded to include more online services tailored for regional and remote small businesses which have difficulty accessing Queensland's 19 State Development Centres.

The Queensland Government also recognises that small businesses are facing a range of challenges in their day-to-day operations. The recently released *Small Business – a high priority for the Smart State* discussion paper outlines a number of contemporary issues impacting on Queensland small businesses. Small business operators are encouraged to provide written comments on any of the issues covered in the discussion paper and any other issues not covered.

Submissions can be lodged up until 12 May 2006 through the following avenues:

- online: www.getinvolved.qld.gov.au
- e-mail: smallbusiness@sd.qld.gov.au
- post: Office of Small Business
Department of State Development, Trade and Innovation
Reply Paid 15168
CITY EAST QLD 4002
- fax: (07) 3234 0487