

Question on Notice
No. 494
Asked on 30 March 2006

MR WALLACE 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 export potential of small business in Queensland?

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 Queensland Government recognises that developing the export potential of small business is a key contributor to enhancing business success in Queensland. Export continues to provide significant opportunities for small businesses throughout the State.

The Department of State Development, Trade and Innovation provides a range of export assistance which includes practical export advice; export skills development programs; introduction to potential business partners and export opportunities; visits to overseas markets and on-the-ground support; and introduction to inbound buyers visiting Queensland.

Assistance is provided through our domestic and international network including:

- dedicated export market teams in Brisbane which cover key exporting regions including North and East Asia, South Asia, South East Asia and the Pacific, Europe, the Americas and the Middle East;
- an overseas network including ten Queensland Government Trade and Investment Offices and a Queensland Government representative in Qatar;
- three Queensland Government Special Representatives based in Brisbane who lead trade missions, covering the South East Asia, Middle East, Africa, India and Vietnam regions; and
- experienced trade advisors in State Development Centres throughout Queensland.

The New Exporter Development Program is a targeted program of specialised services aimed at identifying Queensland small businesses that have the potential to export and assist them to become sustainable exporters. The services provided include export skills development workshops, mentoring support, export market planning and business introduction to potential overseas partners. The outcomes of assistance provided under this program are that, since the launch of the Trade Strategy in October 2001, 760 firms (as at February 2006) which have never exported, or not exported consistently, have now become new exporters by achieving their first export sale in excess of \$5,000.

In addition, Export Passport Seminars (general awareness) and Export Pathways Workshops (skills development) were held throughout Queensland to increase export awareness and skills of Queensland businesses. Currently, over 508 attendees have participated in the Passport workshops since 2003 and over 1631 attendees have participated in the Pathways workshops since 2000.

The Queensland Industry Development Scheme supports projects that improve business performance and help businesses become internationally competitive, adopt new technology and maximise growth opportunities. The types of export proposals that can be submitted for consideration under the Queensland Industry Development Scheme include those that help businesses to:

- identify and develop new markets including engagement of an export manager (Export Manager Program);
- undertake market research and participate in overseas trade exhibitions;
- research and develop new products and services including product redesign for export markets; and
- improve process design including certification for international standard compliance.

The Small Business Accelerator Program is designed to assist fast growing small Queensland-based firms. The program provides funding and assistance so that small businesses can access the expertise they need as required. The types of assistance provided to clients through the Small Business Accelerator Program include developing a growth plan for getting export-ready and entering export markets.

The Department also assists small information and communications technology (ICT) businesses to expand international markets through a suite of relevant and effective export development programs which provide:

- specialist advice in relation to export readiness, partnering and commercialisation of intellectual property and ICT products;
- education and training; and
- market intelligence (through the Research and Information Service).

In 2006, an export development action plan is currently being developed to further roll out existing and newly created initiatives.

The International Trade Show Assistance Program assists Queensland ICT and biotechnology companies to develop and expand their export opportunities by providing up to \$5,000 to individual businesses and \$10,000 to ICT Clusters to exhibit at international trade shows or to attend trade missions.

Since its establishment in 2000, the International Trade Show Assistance Program has helped 122 Queensland businesses generate immediate export sales of over \$5.3M. These businesses have projected future export sales of approximately \$299M. They have also reported receiving valuable feedback and overseas contacts as a result of their exhibiting at a trade show. The International Trade Show Assistance Program is currently in its second round for 2006.

CeBIT Australia is recognised as Australia's largest ICT event. This year the event is being held at the Sydney Convention and Exhibition Centre from 9-11 May 2006.

Sixteen mainly small and medium Queensland ICT companies, including two clusters, will be co-exhibiting on the 108sqm Queensland ICT stand, hosted by the Queensland Government and the Gold Coast City Council. In preparation for the event, the participating companies have attended a one day "Trade Show Savvy" workshop designed to help them get the most out of CeBIT.

It is estimated that the number of exhibitors and visitors will exceed that of CeBIT 2005, with projected statistics of 700 exhibitors, 30,000 business visitors from Australia and around the world including delegations from Asia Pacific, United States and Europe.

Business advisors also assist small ICT businesses to identify appropriate markets, develop export plans, and facilitate international partnering opportunities.