

Question on Notice
No. 790
Asked on 23 May 2006

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

QUESTION:

With over 60 per cent of small business in Queensland being outside the Brisbane statistical division what is the Government doing to assist those small business owners in regional areas?

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 Government through the Department of State Development, Trade and Innovation (DSDTI) has developed a range of products and services designed to assist small business operators throughout Queensland. These are delivered by the 19 State Development Centres throughout Queensland and through the Department's interactive online subjects known as 'Smart Skills'.

Services and programs offered 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.

The State Development Centres also provide access to financial assistance programs designed to help Queensland businesses expand and create new employment. These programs include:

- Queensland Industry Development Scheme – assisting businesses to increase markets, stimulate competitiveness, attract investment and foster innovation;
- Small Business Accelerator Program – assisting well managed, fast growing, Queensland-based small businesses to overcome growth barriers through the assistance of external experts; and
- Leadership and Management Program – designed to encourage Queensland-based trade and industry associations, clusters of small

businesses, franchisors, and other business and industry groups to assist small business members to recognise and acknowledge the value of leadership and management.

Other significant initiatives that are supporting small business owners in regional Queensland include:

- Women in Business Coaching Scheme – facilitating improved business performance by supporting the long-term growth and development of Queensland businesses that are owned and operated by women.

Since the launch of the Women in Business Coaching Scheme in 2005, 10 organisations have been approved to receive funding under the Scheme. For the 2005/2006 year to date, funding for coaching programs have been approved for Caboolture, Gladstone, Ipswich, Logan, Mackay, Maleny, Maroochydore, Rockhampton, South Brisbane and Townsville.

- Support for business in the immediate aftermath of Cyclone Larry. For example, officers from the State Development Centres Cairns and Townsville were located in the one-stop-shops in Innisfail, Babinda, Tully and Atherton for the purpose of one-on-one consultations. As at 12 May 2006, State Development Centre staff had provided 306 Business Recovery Client Information Sheets, assisted 509 businesses making applications for financial assistance and handled 399 other requests for assistance.
- The Growing Regional Business initiative is designed to stimulate investment and reinvestment into key regions. Funding of up to \$1.5 million has been made available to the regions of Cairns, Townsville, Mackay, the Wide Bay Burnett, the Sunshine Coast and the Gold Coast.

The project has five main objectives. These are to:

- positively influence the image of regional Queensland as an investment destination;
- market the investment appeal of Queensland's regions in a targeted and coordinated way;
- increase the skills base of regional stakeholders in the investment process, including internal regional investment and seeking external investment;
- identify opportunities for local industry growth and business development; and
- inform Government of issues and opportunities facing each region regarding business investment and hence influence the policy agenda.

An investment prospectus has been developed for each region that showcases their regional competitive advantage, main industries, infrastructure, lifestyle attributes and major projects, either committed to or under study. These prospectuses are available on the DSDTI 'Smart Regions' website (www.sdi.qld.gov.au/smartregions).

The Growing Regional Business initiative has also enabled the regions to formulate industry specific growth plans which include key industry projects that will generate investment strategies.

The Government recognises the valuable contribution that small businesses in regional Queensland make to the State's economy, and continues to provide support to assist these businesses to grow.