

Question on Notice
No. 926
Asked on 26 May 2006

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

QUESTION:

As so many small businesses in Queensland are located outside Brisbane, what is this Government doing to assist those small business owners in my area?

ANSWER:

Small business accounts for approximately 96% of Queensland businesses and employs around 50% of all private sector workers. Given this significant contribution to the Queensland economy, the Queensland Government is committed to ensuring that Queensland can offer the best possible environment for business growth and success over the long term.

The Department of State Development, Trade and Innovation has developed a range of products and services designed to assist small business operators throughout Queensland. These services are delivered by a state-wide network of 19 State Development Centres.

The Bundaberg State Development Centre delivers the Department's services and programs within the Bundaberg area. 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.
- 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 Bundaberg State Development Centre also provides access to financial assistance programs including the Queensland Industry Development Scheme, the Small Business Accelerator Program and the Sugar Industry Innovation Fund – assisting industry participants, from farmers to millers, to undertake necessary changes to ensure the industry's long-term economic, social and environmental sustainability.

Assistance provided to local small businesses by the Bundaberg State Development Centre for the 2005-06 financial year (as at end April 2006) included:

- delivery of 36 small business workshops and seminars to 602 participants;
- delivery of 11 Exporter Development initiatives to local businesses;
- delivery of 227 significant one-on-one export assistance consultations;

- delivery of five business and industry development forums to 66 business participants;
- addressed 800 requests for small business assistance;
- delivery of 305 significant one-on-one business consultations;
- undertaken 696 SmartLicence business licensing transactions; and
- five grants to local business and industry under the Sugar Industry Innovation Fund and the Small Business Accelerator program totalling \$223,050 (excl GST).

In addition, the Queensland Government's election commitment relating to Small Business Policy 'Growing Regional Business', is strengthening the regional development focus of our State Development Centre in Bundaberg to increase business development activities and to progress ideas for growth and new business opportunities.

This initiative has provided the Bundaberg State Development Centre with a range of tools to assist Bundaberg to market their industry capabilities to potential investors and provides a wealth of practical information to assist potential investors when making decisions about investing in Bundaberg.

The regional investment prospectus "Growing Your Business in the Wide Bay Burnett region Australia", supported by the region specific web pages, provides business enterprises looking to locate in the region with an excellent overview of the economy, existing business and networks, business infrastructure, lifestyle and the region's future prospects.

In partnership with the local business and the community, the Bundaberg State Development Centre has developed a Growth Plan identifying potential projects aimed at generating and encouraging business investment and re-investment in the Wide Bay Burnett region.

Projects that have recently been approved as part of this initiative include:

- Aviation Investment Attraction Action Plan (\$108,000);
- Advanced Manufacturing Industry Investment Action (\$80,000);
- Food Processing Industry Development Strategy (\$100,000);
- facilitation of two Economic Development Officer Skills Training; and
- workshops to foster an investment friendly environment (\$6,000).

These projects will assist small businesses in these industry sectors identify niche opportunities.

Assistance to small business is also available on-line through the Smart Small Business Website at www.smartsmallbusiness.qld.gov.au. The site offers a range of Queensland Government services such as SmartLicence Online, Smart Skills Online and the Steps to Growth program. Services are being expanded to include more online services tailored for regional and remote small businesses which have difficulty accessing Queensland's 19 SDCs.

Additional resources for small business information, licensing and support are available through the Department's Call Centre on telephone 1300 363 711.