

Question on Notice

No. 257

Asked on 1 April 2014

MR HOBBS ASKED THE TREASURER AND MINISTER FOR TRADE (MR NICHOLLS)—

QUESTION:

Will the Treasurer outline the achievements of the current government's red tape reduction and reforms and the benefits of these reforms for the businesses and residents of the Warrego Electorate?

ANSWER:

The Queensland Government has made a clear commitment to reduce red tape and regulation by 20% by 2018. We did so recognising that deregulation is a critical area of microeconomic reform to improve Queensland's productivity, increase business investment and promote innovation – all key drivers of economic growth.

In pursuit of this goal, we have established a rigorous framework that promotes a culture across Government aimed at reducing the burden of regulation on business and the community.

Key elements of the framework include: establishment of the independent Office of Best Practice Regulation (OBPR) within the Queensland Competition Authority; establishment of a baseline measure of the regulatory burden; and setting specific reduction targets for each agency.

I am pleased to say the OBPR's first Annual Report for 2012-13 highlighted that the Government achieved a 3.5% reduction in the burden of regulation in its first 15 months of office.

Importantly, the Government's focus on reducing red tape is not about reducing regulation indiscriminately. We will not remove necessary consumer, environmental and safety protections.

The Government has already implemented numerous red tape reduction initiatives, ranging from major legislative reforms to specific administrative changes, delivering significant savings and benefits to the State's industries and businesses, not-for-profit and community organisations and families, including those in the Warrego electorate.

The Warrego electorate contains a mix of small, medium and large businesses operating in various sectors of the economy, community organisations and residents, many of which are benefitting directly from the Government's red tape reduction efforts.

Warrego has a strong tradition in agriculture, and the Government has been very active in reducing red and green tape and regulatory burden on this key pillar of the economy.

Key reforms likely to benefit agricultural producers in the Warrego region include:

- simplifying and streamlining the vegetation management framework to allow landholders to undertake routine management activities such as fodder harvesting without the need to regularly apply for permits;
- removing the requirement for irrigators to prepare Land and Water Management plans, saving approximately \$7 million per annum over the next 25 years;
- reducing the range of activities regulated as prescribed environmentally relevant activities, benefitting intensive animal feed lotting and pig keeping;
- simplifying the renewal of water licences, with up to 27,000 water licence holders no longer having to apply to renew their licences;
- streamlining the lease renewal process for agricultural, grazing and pastoral land;
- enabling easier renewal of fodder permits; and
- reforming biosecurity legislation and regulation to deliver a single cohesive framework for managing biosecurity risks in Queensland.

A coal seam gas (CSG) and liquefied natural gas (LNG) energy sector is emerging on the Warrego region's eastern fringes. The Streamlining Mining and Petrol Tenure Approvals Project has introduced a number of reforms benefitting the CSG and LNG industries, including streamlining the rules applying to the management and transport of water and brine.

Opal mining has a long history in south west Queensland and the Government has introduced a range of reforms benefitting small scale miners of opal and other gemstones. These include allowing miners that are on a mining lease up to 20 hectares in size to convert to a mining claim and take advantage of the simpler administrative processes and lower fees attached to this tenure type.

Ecotourism is becoming more prominent in the Warrego region and is likely to benefit from the numerous initiatives the Government has implemented to boost this sector of the tourism industry, including:

- improving access for tourism operators in national parks and reducing permit classes by 50 per cent; and
- simplifying invoice requirements for commercial operators in national parks, resulting in a 75 per cent reduction in financial paperwork.

Another key focus of the Government's reform efforts has been the housing and construction sector, with reforms including:

- removing requirements mandating rainwater tanks and energy efficient hot water systems, reducing the cost of new homes by up to \$3,500;
- removing the need for a building approval for works to certain pool fences, with a single pool safety standard replacing 11 standards; and
- introducing a category of 'notifiable works' for plumbers and drainers, expected to save Queenslanders up to \$18 million per annum on application fees for kitchen and bathroom renovations alone.

The Government is also taking important steps to help buyers, sellers and agents involved in real estate and property sales, including removal of the requirement to provide a sustainability declaration when selling or advertising the sale of residential property.

The Government has also reinstated the principal place of residence transfer duty concession, providing assistance of up to \$7,175 for eligible homebuyers.

The *Land Sales Act 1984* is being reviewed to reduce time and costs in the contractual process, while a major review of the State's property laws is also underway to identify further opportunities to make it easier and simpler for individuals and businesses when buying, selling or managing property.

Another key focus of the Government's reform efforts is reducing the regulatory burden on not-for-profit and other community organisations which deliver vital frontline services such as family support, health services, housing, and services for vulnerable and disadvantaged people.

Key reforms in this space include: commencement of the Human Services Quality Framework to allow Non-Government organisations (NGOs) to conform to one set of quality standards; streamlining funding approvals for disability service providers; and streamlining monitoring and reporting for Home and Community Care providers. These and other reforms help free up time and money for these organisations to focus on delivering frontline social services.

Other noteworthy red tape reduction reforms implemented or in progress, that may benefit businesses, community groups and individuals in the Warrego electorate include:

- significantly reducing Greentape for a range of business activities, which is expected to save over \$6 million annually and reduce the paperwork and fees for over 9,400 small to medium businesses;
- halving the number of Work, Health and Safety forms for information collected from businesses;
- abolishing the waste levy, saving many businesses up to thousands of dollars per year;
- reforms to liquor and gaming regulations, which reduce licensing and compliance requirements for low risk businesses and community events;
- reforms to ease the cost burden on pubs, clubs and other licensees in the local community, while also maintaining a high level of accountability within the industry; and
- from 1 October 2014, removing the requirement for businesses and individuals to have registration stickers for cars and other light vehicles.

To keep Queenslanders informed of the Government's red tape reduction achievements, the Government regularly releases Red Tape Reduction Report Cards. On 7 April 2014, the Government released a two year anniversary Report Card outlining some of the significant, tangible benefits of reforms delivered by this Government over the last two years.

The Government has also established an interactive database of Key Red Tape Reduction Initiatives, which enables individuals and businesses to easily identify the red tape reduction measures of most interest and benefit to them.

Both the Report Cards and database, which are available on the Queensland Treasury and Trade website, highlight the benefits being delivered to businesses, communities, not-for-profit organisations and individuals throughout the State.

While much has been achieved in reducing the burden of regulation on business and the community, much still remains to be done.

The Government's red tape reduction initiatives will not stop here. The Government is committed to identifying further opportunities to reduce red tape and unnecessary regulation on an ongoing basis, delivering benefits to all Queenslanders.