

Question on Notice

No. 1454

Asked on 30 August 2016

MR RYAN ASKED THE MINISTER FOR INNOVATION, SCIENCE AND THE DIGITAL ECONOMY AND MINISTER FOR SMALL BUSINESS (HON L ENOCH)—

Will the Minister outline how the Palaszczuk Government is supporting innovation and small businesses within Queensland?

ANSWER:

I thank the Member for Morayfield for his question and acknowledge his strong support for the Palaszczuk Government's innovation and jobs plan.

Through our Advance Queensland agenda, the Palaszczuk Government is investing \$405 million in innovation to strategically position Queensland now, and into the future. Advance Queensland is a transformational agenda, with programs based on international evidence of what works to both strengthen and scale our innovation system.

Advance Queensland is taking a systems approach to supporting and accelerating innovation in Queensland. This means we are investing in initiatives that will enable Queenslanders to innovate, unleash their entrepreneurial skills and turn ideas into investable products, processes and systems that build businesses, improve productivity and ultimately create jobs.

We are also supporting researchers and businesses to connect and innovate through programs like the Knowledge Transfer Partnerships program, which builds collaboration between universities and small businesses by bringing on a university graduate to work on an innovative project. Round 1 of this program saw 21 successful recipients partnered with six universities.

Meanwhile, there are hundreds of businesses across the State building collaborations and innovation capability through the Innovate Queensland suite of programs. Between September 2015 and June 2016, 553 participants attended 37 innovation skills workshops in both metropolitan and regional locations across Queensland, and 99 participants attended five collaboration events.

Businesses are also being supported to commercialise their ideas through the Ignite Ideas Fund, which supports the development of new or improved products, processes or services to launch into global markets. The Fund is already making a difference with more than 350 applications received and 39 projects funded.

The Small Business Innovation Research program, which was launched on 17 July 2016, is also providing commercial opportunities for innovators in Queensland. Through a competitive procurement process, Queensland Government challenges are released to be solved by the open market. Successful applicants receive funding to research, develop and test their ideas. At the end of the process, applicants have the possibility to secure a contract with a Queensland Government agency and retain their intellectual property in order to seek other commercial opportunities.

Our government has also committed \$22.7 million to the Advancing Small Business Queensland Strategy 2016-20 (The Strategy), which aims to create an environment in which Queensland is the place for small business to start, grow and employ. This strategy focuses on stronger advocacy for small business, simplified and coordinated service delivery, connecting small business to opportunity and empowering small business to grow and employ.

The Palaszczuk Government is committed to supporting our State's 406,000 small businesses and understands that they make a vital contribution to our regions and are an important component of the economic and social fabric of our communities. In the Member's own electorate of Morayfield, 98 per cent of businesses are small businesses.

Through our small business strategy we will deliver the Small Business Entrepreneurs Grants Program, which incorporates the highly successful Entrepreneurs of Tomorrow Program, to help small businesses get a better start through planning, coaching and training.

The Palaszczuk Government will also support small business through our new part of the digital economy. Through our Digital Grants Program we will provide matched grants of up to \$10,000 which can be used to obtain advice and support to build an online presence or to purchase the necessary equipment their businesses need.

The Palaszczuk Government has committed to expanding the highly successful Mentoring for Growth Program to deliver more mentoring sessions across the State. We also want to improve small business access to mentors and mentoring and will achieve this through the new Monthly Mentor Chats Program.

Our Strategy provides a focus on supporting women in business as well as supporting and encouraging more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to start a business and help established businesses to be stronger and grow.

One of the key actions under the strategy is the establishment of a Small Business Champion, whose role will be to provide Queensland small businesses with a voice at the national level, promote the issues affecting Queensland businesses and exert influence on the direction of national policies and programs.

The Palaszczuk Government is aiming to create a competitive operating environment for small business by cutting red tape and reducing compliance costs. The government recently tabled our response to the first Red Tape Reduction Advisory Council report setting out our priorities to help small business manage their compliance with regulations.

The Queensland Government is also committed to engaging with small business and the Queensland Small Business Advisory Council allows the Government to hear first-hand the issues affecting small business. The Council provides advice and solutions to me on matters relating to small business growth, sustainability and employment.

Through the Business Queensland website (www.business.qld.gov.au) the Government provides businesses with access to a wide range of information, support and services. Business Queensland online has approximately 1400 services available and is currently being enhanced to ensure it is customer focused and easy to use for small businesses.

I am also committed to ensuring Queensland has the best regulatory system to support both the community and the business sector to thrive.

My department is assisting small business to reduce red tape by transforming how we deliver services through the Business Transformation Program. This program is designed to work with local governments and other Queensland government agencies to transition paper-based licence and application forms to online Smart Forms so that small business can focus on growing their business instead of spending time duplicating their information.

The uptake of Smart Forms has doubled in 2015-16 with more than 85,000 online transactions being submitted. This equates to giving back to small business many hours of work that used to be spent on filling in forms and can now be used to grow their business or assist to balance quality family time.

The Palaszczuk Government understands the importance of our small business community to our economy and jobs and, through the Strategy, has demonstrated its commitment to supporting the sector grow.