

QUESTION ON NOTICE

No. 142

asked on 26 February 2019

MR A HARPER ASKED THE MINISTER FOR EMPLOYMENT AND SMALL BUSINESS AND MINISTER FOR TRAINING AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT (HON S FENTIMAN) —

QUESTION:

Will the Minister provide an update on the establishment of the Small Business Recovery Centre in Townsville following the flooding disaster, including (a) how many small businesses have been assisted, or applied for grants and (b) which business advocates are assisting in the recovery centre such as the Townsville Business Development Centre?

ANSWER:

In a disaster recovery first, the Palaszczuk Government opened a Small Business Recovery Centre (the Centre) on Monday, 11 February 2019. The Centre was designed to support impacted businesses owners needing to find temporary operating premise, access essential business services (e.g. phones, printers and copiers) and receive assistance on topics such as:

- insurance/taxation;
- financial assistance;
- disaster recovery funding arrangements;
- retail leases;
- workplace health and safety; and
- human resource matters.

Staff have supported more than 560 face-to-face engagements at the Centre with small businesses, with a further 317 assisted via outreach officers. A further 415 callers have received advice and support via the 13QGOV hotline specifically in relation to small business recovery for Townsville and Northern Queensland.

The Centre also hosts Queensland Rural and Industry Development Authority (QRIDA) staff to support small businesses access grants and loans available under the joint Commonwealth-State Government Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements.

As at 12 noon 28 March 2019, the QRIDA has approved 142 Special Disaster Assistance Recovery Grants for small businesses worth more than \$1.1 million across the five local government areas that have been activated for these grants. These grants are being provided through the jointly funded Commonwealth-Queensland Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements.

Critical to the success of the Centre, has been the support from local partners, including Townsville City Council, Townsville Enterprise Limited and the Townsville Chamber of Commerce, along with Townsville based small business mentors.

Together with QRIDA, these groups have helped form the Small Business Recovery Advisory Group. This group is helping to co-ordinate information and address emerging issues. Already they have worked to help improve response times for small businesses seeking grants and will continue to support the centre to remain responsive to the needs of local businesses in the months ahead.