

QUESTION ON NOTICE

No. 1893

asked on 27 November 2019

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

QUESTION:

Will the Minister advise what assistance is being provided to bushfire-affected farmers, small business and not-for-profit organisations in Southern Queensland?

ANSWER:

Southern Queensland has been battling severe bushfires and the Palaszczuk Government recognises these fires will have immediate and ongoing economic consequences for local businesses.

Bushfire-affected farmers, small business and not-for-profit organisations in Southern Queensland now have access to low-interest loans to help get them up and running again. The loans will be available in affected parts of the Southern Downs Regional Council and Scenic Rim Council areas.

Affordable and accessible finance is available to those who need it the most. Loans of up to \$250,000 are available to those who suffered a direct loss from the fires to help farmers, business and charities get back to work. Loans of up to \$100,000 are also available for those who had indirect losses, such as loss of profit. Anyone interested in accessing these loans can go to disasterassist.gov.au or call 1800 623 946 to see if they're eligible.

This Category B assistance under the jointly-funded Commonwealth-State Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFA) was activated for Scenic Rim and Southern Downs in response to the unprecedented bushfire event which had seen homes, businesses and industry destroyed. Fortunately, there have not been widespread reports of livestock losses.

The impact of these bushfires is being felt by a number of hardworking farmers and small businesses in the Southern Downs and Scenic Rim regions. The Queensland Government is urging Queenslanders to purchase their goods and services locally. Small businesses are the lifeblood of these communities and they need our support. Freight subsidies of up to \$5,000 for primary producers are also available to assist with recovery, including shipment of materials, fodder and water, as well as the removal of livestock from burnt pastures.

The Department of Employment, Small Business and Training provides a number of programs to support Queensland small business, including some programs developed for sectors facing specific challenges like the bushfires. These programs

include: Go Local/Grow Local; Mentoring for Growth; Small Business Digital Grants; the Social Enterprise Grants Program; and the Business Growth Fund. In addition to drought responses, departmental regional staff have also been actively providing small business support as a result of the recent bushfire events, including staffing within hubs as well as outreach services. Applications for program funding, like the Back to Work program, have also been fast tracked for employers impacted by recent bushfires.

The Scenic Rim has seen significant impacts on local farming businesses and indirect impact on local businesses in Canungra and Binna Burra due to the bushfires. Regional Skills Adjustment Strategy (RSAS) funding has been approved to support an estimated 57 displaced employees from Binna Burra Lodge and approximately 30 displaced workers from supply chain and other impacted businesses in the region, to gain career planning support and training assistance.