



CONVERGE

2025 SMALL BUSINESS FRIENDLY CONFERENCE

WEDNESDAY 28 MAY 2025

&

THURSDAY 29 MAY 2025

Hotel Grand Chancellor, 23 Leichhardt St, Spring Hill, Brisbane

CONVERGE

2025 SMALL BUSINESS FRIENDLY CONFERENCE

Empowering Councils, Strengthening Communities, Driving Growth

In an era of rapid change, local governments play a crucial role in shaping the success of small businesses and the broader economic landscape. The conference theme, 'Converge', brings together council leaders, industry experts, and business innovators to explore collaborative strategies that drive economic resilience and community prosperity.

This conference is designed to equip local government professionals with the insights, tools, and connections needed to foster small business success. Through thought-provoking keynotes, a dynamic panel discussion, and real-world case studies, attendees will gain actionable strategies to navigate policy challenges and create thriving business ecosystems.

Why Attend?

-  Gain Strategic Insights – Learn from experts about innovative leadership, economic development, and sustainable growth tailored for councils and small business support.
-  Engage with Industry Leaders – Connect with experienced speakers, council representatives, and business leaders shaping the future of local economies.
-  Be Inspired by Success Stories – Hear firsthand how councils and businesses are collaborating to overcome challenges and build vibrant communities.

Whether you're a council leader, economic development officer, or business advocate, this conference will provide the knowledge and networks needed to create lasting impact in your region.

PROGRAM

Wednesday 28 May 2025

9:00AM

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STAFF COLLABORATION WORKSHOP

Join fellow economic development professionals in a dynamic workshop focused on collaboration and innovation. Together, you'll co-create practical, actionable, and measurable strategies to drive meaningful support for small businesses.

4:00PM

5:00PM

WELCOME RECEPTION

Join us for a warm welcome as we kick off the conference with light refreshments and great company—connect, relax, and start the event on a high note!

7:00PM

Thursday 29 May 2025

REGISTRATIONS OPEN (8AM - 8:30AM)

Members to sign in at registrations desk - tea and coffee available.

CONFERENCE OPENING AND WELCOME

MC: Ross Giudice, Economic Development Manager, Brisbane City Council.

WELCOME TO COUNTRY

Turrbal Elder

MINISTERIAL ADDRESS & SBF AWARD PRESENTATIONS

The Honourable Steve Minnikin MP, Minister for Customer Services and Open Data and Minister for Small and Family Business

KEYNOTE: THE FUTURE OF LOCAL LEADERSHIP: DRIVING STRATEGIC ECONOMIC GROWTH.

Want to drive real change in your community? Join Alicia McKay as she unpacks how local government leaders can fuel economic growth, forge powerful partnerships and create future-ready communities. Packed with fresh insights and actionable strategies, this session is a must-attend for anyone looking to embrace innovation, collaboration and agile decision-making in a rapidly evolving landscape.

Presenter: Alicia McKay, Local Government Strategist

Morning Tea (10:30am - 11:00am)

PROGRAM

BREAKING BARRIERS: UNLOCKING COLLABORATION BETWEEN COUNCILS AND SMALL BUSINESS

How can councils break down barriers and create real opportunities for small businesses and young entrepreneurs? Taj Pabrai, found of 'The ASE Group', dives into the challenges of procurement and engagement. He'll share practical ways to foster an innovation-friendly ecosystem that benefits businesses, councils, and communities alike.

Presenter: Taj Pabari, Co-Founder, The ASE Group

BEYOND THE ROADS, RATES, RUBBISH MANDATE: SUSTAINABLE GROWTH IN REMOTE COMMUNITIES

Sustainable growth starts from within. This session explores how rural towns are using their own resources, expertise, and partnerships to build thriving economies. Tony Raynor will break down innovative approaches that have helped communities enhance infrastructure, attract investment, and create long-term opportunities. Learn how shifting beyond traditional service models is empowering towns to shape their own future.

Presenter: Tony Raynor, The Remote Area Planning and Development Board (RAPAD)

CULTIVATING SYNERGIES: ENHANCING LOCAL ECONOMIES & AGRITOURISM PARTNERSHIPS

Discover how agritourism is transforming local economies and strengthen ties between farmers, food producers, small business and councils. Nicole McNaughton from the 'Food and Agribusiness Network' shares practical strategies for leveraging partnerships to create immersive farm-to-table experiences, drive economic growth and enrich community connections.

Presenter: Nicole McNaughton, CEO, Food and Agribusiness Network (FAN)

Lunch (12:30pm - 1:15pm)

PROGRAM

PANEL: FUTURE-PROOFING LOCAL ECONOMIES: HOW COUNCILS & BUSINESSES CAN THRIVE TOGETHER

Join industry experts as they tackle the biggest challenges facing small businesses today. Building on Alicia McKay's keynote, this panel will explore how councils can drive growth through smart policy, strategic partnerships and forward-thinking initiatives. Expect real insights, practical solutions and a dynamic discussion on the future of small businesses in Queensland.

Panel Members: Dominique Lamb, TBC

Moderator: Alicia McKay

GLOBAL INSIGHTS, LOCAL IMPACT: HOW LOGAN'S 'QUALITY OF LIFE INDEX' DRIVES SOLUTIONS

Explore how Logan City Council is using the United Nations' 'Quality of Life Index' to drive smart policy, support small businesses and create a more sustainable, inclusive economy. David Hansen will share how this data-driven approach enhances community well-being, fuels regional prosperity and offers a model for councils looking to build resilient, thriving communities.

Presenter: David Hansen, Director Growth, Economy & Sustainability, Logan City Council

THE HIVE MINDSET: THRIVING THROUGH COLLABORATION AND ADAPTATION

Bees thrive through collaboration—and so do great businesses. Jack Stone of 'Bee One Third' shares how embracing the hive mindset helped navigate uncertainty, foster resilience and strengthen partnerships with councils and communities. Discover how the principals of 'festooning—bees' natural approach to collective problem-solving – can inspire a more connected, adaptable and sustainable future for businesses and local economies.

Presenter: Jack Stone, Director / Apiarist, Bee One Third

Afternoon tea (2:45pm - 3:00pm)

PROGRAM

ENGAGED CITIES: SHAPING SMALL BUSINESS SUCCESS THROUGH INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY DIALOGUE

Mel Hagedorn unpacks how councils can foster deeper community connections through meaningful engagement, stakeholder collaboration and digital transformation. Drawing from her experience across government, corporate and non-for-profit sectors, she'll share actionable strategies for creating inclusive programs, enhancing and leveraging social licensing to drive sustainable community growth.

Presenter: Melissa Hagedorn, Client Executive, Capire Consulting

FROM INSIGHT TO ACTION: TRANSFORMING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT THROUGH COLLABORATION

What happens when SBF members come together to tackle challenges and spark new ideas? Rachel Edrington shares the key takeaways from our pre-conference workshop, highlighting fresh perspectives, practical solutions and collaborative strategies to drive progress in local communities across Queensland.

Presenter: Rachael Edginton, Managing Director, Plum Communication + Council Economic Development Officers

FLOURISHING COMMUNITIES: THE SMALL BUSINESS & LOCAL GOVERNMENT BLUEPRINT

In this inspiring closing keynote, Rachael Edrington explores how we can cultivate an environment where both individuals and businesses thrive, using the latest scientific research from Positive Psychology, Rachael will delve into the core elements that drive wellness and personal prosperity: fostering joy, deep engagement in our work, nurturing authentic connections, embracing purpose, and striving for meaningful success. Through real-world insights and practical strategies, she will illustrate how these pillars can be woven into our daily lives, strengthening organisations, energising communities, and paving the way for sustainable growth.

Join us as we reimagine what it means to create a thriving, resilient, and collaborative ecosystem—one where people and businesses flourish together.

Presenter: Rachael Edginton, Managing Director, Plum Communication

CLOSING REMARKS AND FAREWELL

Dominique Lamb - Queensland Small Business Commissioner