

# Queensland Better Regulation Update

2021

Small businesses are the cornerstone of Queensland's economy and communities.

Over the past two years, Queensland small businesses have been challenged as never before, due to the far-reaching economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Our local businesses have also had to navigate a shifting landscape of changes in consumer behaviour, rapid uptake of digital technologies and necessary public health measures.

Businesses across the state have shown incredible resilience in response, adapting and innovating to drive our economic recovery.

The Queensland Government has worked hard to help small businesses remain competitive in these uncertain times.

Supporting small businesses is a vital part of Queensland's plan for economic recovery. The Queensland Government has committed more than \$14.5 billion towards supporting the health and economic response to COVID-19, which has helped to protect the health and wellbeing of Queenslanders, and support small business to thrive in a changing environment.

Cutting red tape has also been an important way for the government to provide emergency support to Queensland businesses.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the government waived a range of regulatory fees and charges, and

requirements, to assist businesses to continue to operate, recover and rebuild. For example, we provided payroll tax relief for Queensland businesses and waived fees for tourism operators in places like national parks. We extended trading hours and waived licence fees for food, alcohol and grocery businesses, enabled licenced restaurants and cafes to provide takeaway alcohol with takeaway food sales, and independent craft brewers and artisan distillers to sell products online. Exemptions have been granted to Queensland's border restrictions for specialist or essential agribusiness workers.

From February to early March 2021, as part of the Small Business Roadshow, the Minister for Employment and Small Business and Minister for Training and Skills Development, the Honourable Di Farmer, travelled across Queensland hosting **17 face-to-face sessions** with over **1,400** small business owners and local chamber representatives. Over **2,500 participants** provided input.

The message was clear — small businesses need help navigating their regulatory requirements, particularly in today's unpredictable environment.

The Queensland Government's commitment of **\$140 million** over 2 years through the *Big Plans for Small Business Strategy* directly responds to the clear feedback received during the Roadshow, ensuring a strong and resilient small business sector that will not only survive but thrive.



# Big Plans for Small Business

The *Big Plans for Small Business Strategy* (BPSB Strategy) aims to help small business thrive and grow through a commitment of \$140 million over two years. This includes the \$100 million Business Investment Fund to invest in small to medium sized businesses with significant growth potential and which will create Queensland jobs. The Strategy also includes \$30 million to increase skills and capability through grants and other support for small business and \$10 million to make the Queensland Small Business Commissioner permanent and to establish a targeted engagement framework that includes reinvigorating the Queensland Small Business Advisory Council.

One of the focus areas for the BPSB Strategy is *Doing Business Better*. We will take action to help small businesses to understand their regulatory requirements and work better with government. This includes reducing compliance, connecting businesses with the right information, providing clearer pathways for small businesses to resolve disputes, increasing opportunities for small businesses to supply to government and ensuring they are paid on time and in full.

To find out more about the Strategy, visit: <https://desbt.qld.gov.au/small-business/strategic-documents/small-business-strategy>



## Small Business Regulatory Reform initiative

5 of the 7 **\$60.1 million reform projects** have been completed and two projects are nearing completion.



## Queensland Small Business Commissioner (QSBC)

In 2020–21, the QSBC carried out **4,505** activities, including 683 leasing disputes.



## Reduced payment terms for small business suppliers

Government payment timeframes to small businesses have been reduced to **20 calendar days** from 1 July 2020.



## EcoBiz

Over **1,000** businesses registered, with **90%** recording an increase in productivity and savings.



## Small Business Friendly Councils

**23 local councils** have signed on to help reduce red tape for small business.



## SME Procurement Target

The SME Procurement target of **25%** was exceeded in the first six months following implementation on 1 July 2020.

# Making processes easier and more straightforward

---



## Business Launchpad

The Business Launchpad provides a one stop shop online tool for small businesses to find what they need to know about government regulatory requirements — federal, state and local — instead of having to search multiple websites.

The tool also prefills details, which means businesses don't have to repeatedly enter the same information each time they start an application.

The Launchpad is now live on the Business Queensland website for a number of local councils. The Launchpad currently provides information for businesses within the food and beverage and residential construction industries.

Find out more by visiting <https://www.business.qld.gov.au/starting-business/planning/launchpad>



## Cutting red tape for liquor, gaming and occupational licences

We have reduced the time it takes to complete legal obligations, making it easier for individuals to get a job and remain employed and for small businesses to focus on running their business.

A new automated online service allows new and existing individual liquor and gaming licence holders to submit and pay for their applications online. This initiative has shortened the time it takes to complete individual licence applications by implementing an automated assessment process. Notable reductions in processing times by the Office of Liquor and Gaming Regulation have been achieved with many renewal applications being received and finalised within one business day. Since introduction in late 2020 approximately 1,900 liquor and gaming occupational licence applications had been received through this service – about 70% of all such applications.

The digital transformation of the licence renewal system also provides individuals and businesses regulated by the Office of

Fair Trading with a streamlined submission platform to renew their licences at a time that suits them.

In 2020-21, licence renewal applications received online averaged **8 days** from lodgement to approval compared to **32 days** for the same licence classes received through a non-digital channel. For fair-trading licences, **74% or 23,769 licence renewals** received online were processed **within 1 day**. It also facilitates the online lodgement of annual returns by incorporated associations.

*The Liquor (Artisan Liquor) Amendment Bill 2020* introduced amendments to the *Liquor Act 1992*, to establish a new artisan producer liquor licence. The new licence reduces red tape and provides greater market access opportunities for Queensland's independent craft brewers and artisan distillers.

The new licence allows distillers and brewers to sell their own product as well as other artisanal products and Queensland wine for on-premises consumption, showcase and sell samples at promotional events such as farmers' markets and sell their product as takeaway.

Previously, artisan producers often had to obtain multiple liquor licences to operate under their preferred business model. Now the authorisations they need are contained in one artisan licence. This tailor-made licence is allowing small-scale producers to grow their business and their brand, do business with less red tape, and employ more people, particularly in regional communities.



## Apprenticeship and traineeship support for small business

The Queensland Government is providing personalised text alerts and tutorial videos to make it easier for small businesses to employ apprentices and trainees.

The SMS system keeps employers updated on their obligations and training milestones, while updated information and short videos on the Business Queensland website cover the benefits and issues employers can face.



## Food Pantry

The Food Pantry is an online food safety portal that provides a one-stop-shop for information on legislative requirements and information on licensing and training requirements. It provides all food businesses with a single source of online information on food safety requirements, including tools such as an interactive online label creation tool, plus self-assessment checklists, fact sheets, templates and posters.

The Food Pantry provides a simple and user-friendly way for food businesses and consumers to find information about food safety legislation, licensing and training requirements. This saves businesses time and helps them comply with food safety standards.



## Supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned business development

The Queensland Government is working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned businesses to identify their business development needs and aspirations and connect them to support programs and services to strengthen and grow their business.

Under the Queensland Indigenous (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Procurement Policy, the Queensland Government promotes procurement opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander suppliers and facilitates

streamlined engagement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned businesses with government agencies and private buyers.



## Streamlined NDIS Worker Screening

Nationally consistent National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) worker screening rolled out in Queensland from 1 February 2021, with the commencement of the *Disability Services and Other Legislation (Worker Screening) Amendment Act 2020* (Worker Screening Act). All registered NDIS providers, in Queensland and nationwide, must now ensure staff engaged to work with NDIS participants in risk assessed roles hold a current NDIS worker screening clearance.

The Worker Screening Act includes a number of measures to streamline the screening process for providers (many of which are small businesses or sole traders), while retaining strong safeguards for people with disability. These measures include: a combined application process for people requiring disability worker screening and a working with children check; national portability of clearances; streamlined confidential information sharing with Blue Card Services; extended, five-year validity of clearances; an online application process with strengthened identity requirements; and ongoing national criminal history monitoring.

Find out more by visiting <https://workerscreening.dsdsatsip.qld.gov.au/>

# Reducing compliance requirements and costs



## Co-operatives National Law

Queensland co-operatives have around 19,000 members and a collective revenue of **\$250 million**. They support many local jobs and small businesses, particularly in regional communities.

Queensland adopted a nationally consistent approach by replacing the *Cooperatives Act 1997* with the *Co-operatives National Law Act 2020*. The new laws simplify the function and operation of Queensland co-operatives, reduce reporting requirements for small co-operatives and introduce new ways for all co-operatives to fundraise.

Small businesses apply for access to the road corridor for a range of activities to enhance their business delivery. This includes activities such as roadside dining, roadside advertising, traffic management, conducting a business and promotional activities. **16,000 applications** are made every year for road corridor access and traffic control permits, with an average of **70%** of these applications being from small businesses. In regional areas this can be as high as 96% of applications.

The new online system allows applications to be easily submitted, processed and permits to be issued and managed from a central system – saving time and effort for small businesses. It also makes it easier for customers to keep track of their information and transactions with government and allows for multiple permit applications.

It is estimated the PARC project **decreases administrative burden by approximately 20%**, which equates to potential **savings of more than \$600,000 per annum** across the sector.



## Permit for Access to Road and Corridor (PARC)

The PARC project is an online solution that reduces the amount of time it takes to apply for and issue road corridor access and traffic control permits for small businesses.

# Queensland Small Business Commissioner



The temporary Queensland Small Business Commissioner (QSBC) and supporting office was established in May 2020 to provide support for small businesses impacted by COVID-19. The current role of the temporary QSBC is to provide information and advisory services and dispute resolution services to small business.

The Queensland Government has committed to the permanent establishment of a Small Business Commissioner and supporting office for Queensland. As part of this commitment, the QSBC will work with the Office of Productivity and Red Tape Reduction to deliver small business regulatory reform.

The QSBC has implemented the Small Business Friendly Councils initiative, with 23 local councils signing on to the initiative to date.

Participating councils pledge commitment to their small business community, including being mindful of the needs and priorities of their small businesses when making policy decisions, undertaking regulatory activities and procuring goods and services.

To find out more about the work of the QSBC, visit [www.business.qld.gov.au/qsbc](http://www.business.qld.gov.au/qsbc).



## COVID-19 Payroll Tax Relief

The Queensland Government has announced more than **\$1.35 billion** in tax relief measures since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, including payroll tax relief to support Queensland businesses.

Employers with annual Australian taxable wages of \$6.5 million or less were eligible for a refund of payroll tax paid for November and December 2019, and a payroll tax holiday for January to March 2020 and July and August 2020. Employers with annual Australian taxable wages above \$6.5 million who were negatively affected by COVID-19 were eligible for a refund of payroll tax for January and February 2020. Both groups were also eligible to defer their payroll tax liabilities for the 2020 calendar year and for an exemption for the subsidised component of JobKeeper payment.

Additionally, hospitality and tourism businesses who declared they had been affected by COVID-19 lockdowns were able to defer their August or September 2021 payroll tax payments by six months.

More than **17,500 businesses** received a payroll tax holiday, refund or waiver and more than **\$500 million** worth of refunds was paid. More than **11,000 businesses** deferred their payroll tax liabilities for the 2020 calendar year to be paid in instalments in the 12 months to January 2021–22, with approximately **6,000** of these considered to be Small and Medium Enterprises.

This provided much needed support to businesses registered for payroll tax during the COVID-19 pandemic.



# Improving regulator practices



## Office of State Revenue Transformation Program

The Queensland Government is making it easier for Queenslanders to do business with the State's revenue department.

The Office of State Revenue's online portal (OSR Online) has been expanded to administer State taxes and royalties by allowing documents to be given to and by clients through electronic communication. OSR Online operates around the clock and allows for registered businesses to self-manage their taxation and royalty obligations.

These changes extended existing electronic lodgement and service functionalities to all of the revenue laws and royalties.

The OSR Transformation Program has improved services and outcomes for Queenslanders, government and the community through digital solutions, cutting the costs of administering revenue, and an online taxpayer portal that provides more streamlined online processes, more pre-filled forms, better automation, and greater transparency for Queenslanders when it comes to their obligations and entitlements.



## Modern food safety regulation

The Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, Safe Food Production Queensland and Queensland Health are leading a range of activities around food safety regulation.

The Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, Safe Food Production Queensland and Queensland Health are working at the national level to modernise the national food safety regulatory system and improve consistency across Australia. The Department of Agriculture and Fisheries' network of regional staff helps businesses navigate government information and processes.

Safe Food Production Queensland works with businesses that employ innovative approaches to food production to ensure food safety, and the agency's website has tailored information for primary producers on legislation and regulation. A dedicated officer is allocated to each new accreditation applicant to help with queries and guide them through the accreditation process.



## Debt Recovery and Compliance Program

The Queensland Treasury Debt and Compliance Program will improve upfront compliance for tax and royalty payers.

This program involves automating and pre-populating data for businesses and provides reminders to improve compliance. It means businesses will have a client centred service making it easier for tax and royalty payers to meet their obligations from the start.



21090 11/21

## More information

For more information on the wide range of initiatives and support for small business, visit Business Queensland at

[www.business.qld.gov.au](http://www.business.qld.gov.au)