

# QUEENSLAND SMALL BUSINESS STRATEGY 2024-27

Powering small business





Bloomfield river near Wujal Wujal

## Acknowledgement of First Nations peoples

The Queensland Government respectfully acknowledges the First Nations peoples in the state of Queensland, and acknowledges the cultural and spiritual connection that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have with the land and sea.

We respectfully acknowledge Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islander people as two unique and diverse peoples, with their own rich and distinct cultures, resilience and strengths.

We specifically acknowledge the unique history and cultural heritage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the First Peoples of Australia. We pay our respects to Elders past and present.

We are dedicated to the inclusion of cultural knowledge and values as critical factors in the development, implementation and evaluation of strategies and actions to support First Nations peoples.

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Published by the Queensland Government, May 2024, 1 William St, Brisbane Qld, 4000.

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# MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER

Queensland's small businesses are not just the engine room of our economy, they are the lifeblood of local communities – delivering growth, innovation, and new jobs to Queenslanders each and every day.

Small businesses are vital to Queensland's economic wellbeing, contributing more than \$117 billion each year, fuelling the cycle of growth by providing employment for over 40 per cent of the state's private sector workforce.

Across the state 482,000 small businesses provide jobs for over one million people, contributing to local economies and helping their industries, businesses, and communities to grow.

We can thank small businesses – our local tradies, hairdressers, cafe owners, tourism operators and more – for growing our economy and supporting our regions and local communities.

The new *Queensland Small Business Strategy 2024–27* (Strategy) will focus on providing more support to our small businesses, with many impacted by cost-of-living pressures.

The Strategy is designed to lower operating costs, boost opportunities, build business resilience and capability, and grow diversity in the sector.

The Queensland Government is addressing the cost of living for small businesses by lowering energy costs through rebates; supporting them to reduce energy costs and save money on energy, water and waste; and providing Free TAFE to cut training costs for Queenslanders working in a small business.

Now, with Queensland's Big Build delivering the biggest decade of infrastructure in our state's proud history, there's never been a greater opportunity for our small businesses to share in growth and prosperity on offer from the Miles Government's plan.

Over 40 per cent of Queensland's small businesses drive the industries of construction; rental hiring and real estate; and professional, scientific, and technical services, making them absolutely vital to the delivery of our Big Build program.

The new Strategy has key actions over three years to support and enable small businesses to take full advantage of the record investment in Queensland.

The Strategy has the voice of small businesses at its core with almost 2,000 small businesses, industry representatives, peak bodies and key stakeholders having input through the Small Business Survey, an in-depth Small Business Impact Study, and targeted consultation sessions.

Queensland's vibrant small business sector is diverse; it's home to more than 120,000 female business owners which make up more than 37 per cent of all small business owners, more than 47,700 small business owners from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and more than 4,800 First Nations small businesses.

The Strategy reaffirms our commitment to small business and making Queensland the best state in the nation in which to do business. Critically, it supports increased diversification of the small business sector with tailored support to reduce barriers and make it easier for a range of small business owners to start, grow and thrive.

**The Hon. Lance McCallum MP**  
**Minister for Employment and Small Business**  
**Minister for Training and Skills Development**



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Small businesses are vital to a strong Queensland economy and exist in every community in every part of Queensland, contributing to our thriving local economies and regional communities.

Small businesses have faced challenges in the last few years, including natural disasters, challenging market conditions, and rising costs associated with doing business in line with broader cost of living concerns. Finding and keeping good workers can also be difficult.

In 2023–24, the Queensland Government assisted more than 10,000 small businesses through its grant programs, mentoring and coaching support, Business Launchpad, and other assistance measures. More than 4.9 million users have visited the Business Queensland website since 1 July 2023.

These programs are helping business owners and operators increase their skills and capability, manage the costs of doing business, seize growth opportunities and employ workers.

An unprecedented pipeline of opportunities is also emerging for small businesses across the state thanks to the Queensland Government's investment through the Big Build.

Over the next four years, the Big Build will be delivering new and ongoing projects, including:

- the transformation of the state's energy system through development of the SuperGrid under the *Queensland Energy and Jobs Plan*
- a response to the housing needs of the state through the *Homes for Queenslanders Plan*
- infrastructure in time for the Brisbane 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games, and
- delivering other key enhancements that include building more hospitals, upgrading schools, improving water security and better transport.

Small businesses stand to benefit, providing the critical goods and services needed to deliver on the projects that make up this investment, while employing locals and further stimulating economic activity across the state.

Ensuring Queensland's small business sector is well placed to overcome challenges and benefit from growth opportunities is a key focus of the new *Queensland Small Business Strategy 2024–27* (Strategy).

Building on progress made through the *Big Plans for Small Business Strategy 2021–2023*, the new Strategy sets out the Queensland Government's investment in small businesses, with a focus on four key areas:

- lowering costs for small business
- boosting opportunities for small business
- building business resilience, capability and workforce
- growing diversity in the small business sector.

Actions within these focus areas address common themes and issues raised by small business stakeholders during consultation, including:

- increasing operating costs in line with cost of living concerns
- workforce challenges
- procurement opportunities, and
- continuing to build capability across essential business skills.

**The Strategy builds on the *Big Plans for Small Business Strategy 2021–2023*, which has helped small businesses grow and thrive.**

# WHAT QUEENSLAND SMALL BUSINESSES TOLD US

Almost 2,000 small businesses and key stakeholders across Queensland were consulted in the development of this Strategy, including industry representatives, peak bodies, small business owners, the Queensland Small Business Commissioner, members of the Queensland Small Business Advisory Council (QSBAC) and regional offices of the Department of Employment, Small Business and Training (DESBT).

## Key messages we heard include:



### **Workforce:**

Small businesses emphasised the importance of attracting and retaining workers with the required skills and attributes.



### **One-stop-shop for business:**

Small businesses value easy access to government information and the range of services and support available.



### **Costs of doing business:**

Small businesses are concerned about rising costs of doing business, including those resulting from increased global uncertainty and international supply constraints.



### **Grants:**

Small businesses benefit from financial assistance as a key support and value clear and consistent access to this support.



### **Regulation:**

Small businesses want government to make regulations easier to understand and comply with.



### **Business essentials:**

Small businesses are keen to improve their business skills, including financial literacy, people management, digital skills and mental wellbeing.



### **Access to procurement:**

Small businesses value access to government procurement opportunities.



### **Profitability:**

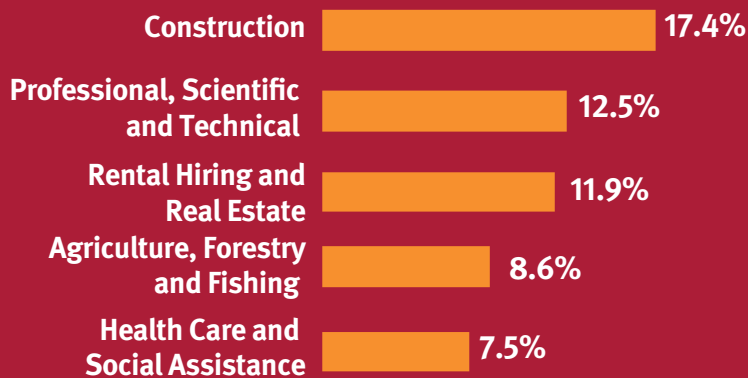
Small businesses prioritise increasing profitability, including through finding and building their customer base.

# SMALL BUSINESS: QUEENSLAND'S ECONOMIC HEARTBEAT

Small businesses operate across every industry and exist in many shapes and forms, from self-employed individuals and micro-businesses to family-run businesses and those employing up to 20 employees.

Construction is the top industry sector for small business in Queensland, with many tradespeople working for themselves. The Queensland Big Build program will create a pipeline of infrastructure and growth for this industry.

## Top industries for small businesses in Queensland in 2023<sup>1</sup>



More than  
**482,000**  
small businesses  
in Queensland<sup>1</sup>  
Over **97%** of  
all businesses



Small businesses  
contributed around  
**\$117 BILLION**  
to the Queensland  
economy<sup>2</sup>



Small businesses  
in Queensland  
employed  
**1,026,000**  
people around  
**42%** of the private  
sector workforce<sup>3</sup>



<sup>1</sup>Australian Bureau of Statistics, 8165.0 Counts of Australian Businesses, including Entries and Exits July 2019 to June 2023, released 18 December 2023.  
Definition of small business: businesses employing fewer than 20 employees.

<sup>2</sup>Queensland Treasury using the data from Australian Bureau of Statistics – 5220.0 Australian National Accounts: State Accounts, 2021–22.

<sup>3</sup>Australian Bureau of Statistics – 8155.0 Australian Industry, 2021–22

<sup>4</sup>Australian Bureau of Statistics – Census 2021 – Employment, Income and Education; Business sizes Nil Employees & 1 – 19 Employees.

<sup>5</sup>Australian Bureau of Statistics, 8165.0 Counts of Australian Businesses, including Entries and Exits July 2019 to June 2023, released 18 December 2023.

<sup>6</sup>Australian Bureau of Statistics – Tourism Research Australia – Tourism businesses in Australia, June 2018 to June 2023.

## Queensland's diverse small business sector



More than  
**124,000**  
Regional small  
businesses located  
outside of SEQ<sup>1</sup>



**120,165**  
Women who own  
/ operate a small business<sup>4</sup>



**47,777**  
Culturally and  
linguistically diverse  
small business owners<sup>4</sup>



**9,338**  
Youth (15–24) indicated  
they own / manage  
a small business<sup>4</sup>



**4,855**  
Indigenous business  
owners and operators<sup>4</sup>



**299,000**  
Non-employed  
businesses<sup>1</sup>



More than  
**78,000**  
new small businesses  
were launched in  
2022–23<sup>5</sup>



More than  
**60,000**  
tourism-related  
small businesses in  
Queensland, with around  
30,000 non-employed  
businesses<sup>6</sup>.

# THE BIGGEST DECADE OF OPPORTUNITY IN HISTORY FOR QUEENSLAND SMALL BUSINESSES



The Queensland Government's **Big Build** investment program will deliver new and ongoing projects over the next four years.



Transformation of the Queensland energy system through development of the **SuperGrid** under the **Queensland Energy and Jobs Plan**.



The **Homes for Queenslanders Plan** will build 1 million new homes by 2046.



Other key enhancements under the capital program include delivering increased health system capacity, improving water security and preparing for the **Brisbane Q2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games**.

## Benefits for Queensland small businesses

Queensland's small businesses are central to delivering our infrastructure pipeline across the state. While small businesses in electrical, plumbing, manufacturing and construction will be needed to get the infrastructure up and running, the flow-on benefits to other local small business providers of goods and services will be considerable. There are opportunities for all kinds of small businesses to be part of this journey.

The clean energy transition also presents a breadth of opportunities for small businesses, ranging from subcontractor operations to supply chain opportunities, including manufacturing.

The Queensland Government's investment in training will support the skills needed to harness new opportunities.

Supporting small business to access the opportunities presented by these investments is a key focus in this Strategy.



# OUR FOUNDATIONS

The Strategy builds on a strong foundation of initiatives in Queensland to support our small businesses.

## **\$140M for Big Plans for Small Business**

The Strategy builds on our *Big Plans for Small Business Strategy 2021–2023*, which set out \$140 million worth of actions to help small businesses grow and thrive.

## **Nearly \$1B increased procurement spend**

The Queensland Government's small and medium enterprise (SME) procurement target has seen procurement spend with Queensland SMEs increase by nearly \$1 billion to \$6.74 billion for the 2022–23 financial year.

## **Payroll tax rebate**

The apprentice and trainee rebate for payroll tax provides Queensland employers with a payroll tax rebate for wages paid to eligible apprentices and trainees.

## **\$650 energy rebate**

Energy relief for small business provides a \$650 rebate on electricity bills for around 205,000 eligible small businesses in Queensland.

## **\$70M under the Queensland Workforce Strategy**

\$70 million investment through the first Action Plan under the *Good people. Good jobs: Queensland Workforce Strategy 2022–32*.

## **50% rebate for Queensland Business Energy Saving and Transformation Rebates Program**

Rebates for SMEs of up to 50% to install new energy efficient equipment to reduce their future energy costs and usage.



Through Buy Queensland almost \$7 billion was injected into Queensland-based small and medium businesses in 2022–23<sup>7</sup>.

<sup>7</sup>Department of Energy and Climate, *Small and Medium businesses benefit big thanks to nation-leading procurement approach*, 28 November 2023.

# OUR VISION FOR SMALL BUSINESS

***A thriving, resilient small business sector supporting local jobs and contributing to a strong economy across Queensland.***

## FOCUS AREAS

### FOCUS AREA 1



**Lowering costs for small business**, including by:

- lowering energy costs by providing \$650 energy rebates for eligible small businesses
- supporting small businesses to reduce their energy costs and helping them to save money on energy, water and waste
- providing Free TAFE to cut training costs for Queenslanders working in a small business.

### FOCUS AREA 2



**Boosting opportunities for small business**, including by:

- supporting access to Queensland Government procurement opportunities, including through the Queensland Big Build program and in the lead up to the Brisbane 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games
- delivering refreshed Queensland Government small business grants to help small businesses to grow, innovate and thrive
- continuing engagement with the small business sector, such as Queensland Small Business Month.

### FOCUS AREA 3



**Building business resilience, capability and workforce** through:

- extending grant funding to help small businesses to build a skilled and accessible workforce
- supporting small businesses to prepare for cyber threats and natural disasters
- reducing financial and mental health impacts for small business owners.

### FOCUS AREA 4



**Growing diversity in the small business sector** by targeting support to:

- Queensland Indigenous small businesses
- social enterprises.

# WORKING FOR YOURSELF TRADIES AND SOLE TRADERS

## *There are more than 299,000 non-employing businesses in Queensland.*

*For small business owners who are sole traders or non-employing, working for yourself often means having to deal with all aspects of running a business. The Queensland Government offers a range of programs and initiatives for businesses of all sizes, including:*

- **Business Basics Grants** – financial support of \$5,000 to increase core skills and adopt best practice. More than 5,300 businesses have been awarded over \$26.9 million in grants.
- **Mentoring for Growth** – enables businesses to connect with dedicated mentors to address opportunities and challenges. Since July 2016, more than 3,700 sessions have been delivered.
- **Free TAFE** – access to free training to develop core business skills.
- **Small Business Support Network** – access to free financial counsellors and wellness coaches.
- **Business Queensland website** – provides 24/7 access to online information, business resources and support.

## CASE STUDY

### *Growing your business as a sole trader*

Blake Campbell is a fully qualified roof tiler and painter and decorator, and he is also the director of **Elevate Roof Restorations**, based on the Gold Coast. Passionate about providing top-quality roofing services to his clients, Blake has been in business for three years and knows first-hand what it's like to work for yourself in an industry with lots of competition.

As a sole trader, looking to the future and possibly hiring an employee, Blake attended a **Mentoring for Growth** session to seek ideas and resources to help him build a successful and sustainable business for the long-term.

“Every business always has room for improvement, and my mentoring session helped me fill the gaps in my business. I came out of it feeling re-energised and ready to move forward,” says Blake.

Now armed with a range of information and resources, Blake says “It was one of the best things I’ve done. I’ve seen growth and efficiencies in areas of my business that I wouldn’t have focused on without the session, and it’s set my business on the right path for long-term sustainability”.





## FOCUS AREA 1

### *Lowering costs for small business*

Small businesses are concerned with rising business costs (such as fuel, electricity, insurance and packaging) and their impacts on profitability. The Queensland Government recognises the rising cost of doing business as a challenge and is continuing to invest in and back small businesses.

There is a growing demand for sustainability management both from small business customers and suppliers, especially for those small businesses seeking to secure contracts with governments or larger companies. By integrating sustainability into their core business activities, small businesses can benefit from lower costs, reduced risk and new opportunities in the infrastructure and clean energy sector supply chains.

**Free TAFE** allows eligible Queenslanders to upskill, re-skill or start a new career. Continuing to support Free TAFE ensures that Queenslanders working in a small business can access free training to ensure they have the skills they need to succeed and grow.

To make it easier to do business, the Queensland Government's Business Queensland website and Business Launchpad helps small businesses to navigate and find government information easily, reducing time and costs for small business.

- The **Business Launchpad** helps businesses to navigate the regulatory environment when starting or running a new enterprise. This initiative has delivered more than \$54.8 million in time savings for Queensland businesses, with more than 96,000 users since its release.
- Since 1 July 2023, more than 4.9 million users have visited the **Business Queensland website**, our dedicated digital channel for business and industry.

## ACTIONS

- 1 Continue to lower energy costs by providing \$650 electricity rebates for eligible small businesses:**
  - Provide \$650 energy bill relief to support Queensland small businesses.
- 2 Continue to support small businesses to reduce their business costs through delivery of the Queensland Business Energy and Savings Transition program:**
  - Provide support for small to medium businesses to install energy efficient equipment to reduce their future energy costs and usage.
- 3 Partner with Business Chamber Queensland to continue to deliver the ecoBiz program to help small businesses save money on energy, water and waste:**
  - Support small businesses to help improve resource efficiency, sustainability and lower business costs.
- 4 Continue Free TAFE to provide small businesses with free access to training:**
  - Support small business owners and employees to ensure they have the skills they need now and into the future.

## Support for the cost of doing business

- **\$64 million** in freight subsidies to Torres Strait Islands, Cape York and Gulf Communities.
- Providing **payroll tax relief** to regional employers, including small and medium sized enterprises, to keep business costs low – including extending the 1% payroll tax regional rate discount until 30 June 2030.



## Helping Queensland exporters take their products to world markets

Trade and Investment Queensland provides at no cost, localised knowledge and assistance to small and medium enterprises to maximise investment and export outcomes for Queensland through the following:

- Business and market assessment and planning
- Networking and events
- Trade missions and buyer programs
- Grants and capability development initiatives.



## Enhancing the operating environment for small business

The permanent appointment of the Queensland Small Business Commissioner in May 2022 means small businesses have a direct avenue for dispute resolution and low-cost, timely mediation services for lease disputes to save businesses time and money.

The Commissioner also plays an important role in providing information and advice, as well as leading programs and activities to make it easier to do business in Queensland.

The Small Business Friendly Program is a key initiative of the Commissioner, providing the framework, tools and networks to support local governments to enhance the operating environment for small businesses in their local communities. To date, 49 Councils have signed up to the Small Business Friendly Program, which covers 96% of the small business community.

The City of Moreton Bay Council is a member of the **Small Business Friendly Program** and used the program's framework to develop an initiative to activate public spaces and offer commercial opportunities for local small businesses.

The program includes a location booking system to streamline site bookings for food trucks and park activity vendors offering services such as bike rental, paddle board hire and face painting.

Twenty-three precincts have already been identified as pop-up sites throughout the region for vendors to temporarily operate on. The streamlined permit application process means once a small business vendor is approved, they can conveniently book their next trading site through the council's online booking system at any time without having to re-apply.

The program is saving small businesses time and providing opportunities to grow their business, all while activating and enhancing public spaces throughout the City of Moreton Bay.

The City of Moreton Bay Council's **Ask Morty chatbot** is the Council's free data concierge service that allows businesses to quickly and easily locate useful census data to better inform their business decisions and help them find more customers.





## FOCUS AREA 2

### *Boosting opportunities for small business*

To help small businesses through a period of rising business costs, we will support them to access new opportunities and grow and create new jobs.

The Queensland Government is dedicated to boosting opportunities for our vibrant small business sector, and empowering small businesses to actively participate in supply chain and procurement opportunities.

The Queensland Government is investing in the Big Build capital works program over the next four years, which will provide a pipeline of opportunities for small business. This includes investing in new and ongoing projects, such as the transformation of the state's energy system through development of the SuperGrid under the *Queensland Energy and Jobs Plan*, infrastructure to deliver a world-class Brisbane 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games, and the new *Homes for Queenslanders Plan*, which sets a target of building one million new homes in the next 20 years.

Financial assistance from government is recognised as a key support to help Queensland small businesses to start, grow and succeed. Small businesses told us they would benefit from the continuation of grants and provided us with feedback on improving the experience.

The grants program under the *Big Plans for Small Business Strategy 2021–2023* has been successful, with 98.9% of grant recipients responding to surveys reporting an increase in capability, and 95.7% projecting an increase in either employment, turnover or profitability.

The Queensland Government will build on this success through a refreshed small business grants program for 2024–27 and will continue to engage with small businesses through the QSBAC, whose members provide advice on issues and opportunities affecting small business.

**Queensland Small Business Month provides an opportunity to showcase successes and for small businesses to access information about the services and support provided by the Queensland Government.**

## ACTIONS

### 5 Increase procurement opportunities for small business:

- Deliver an action plan and dedicated small business procurement advisor to help small businesses seize the procurement opportunities of the Big Build and in the lead up to the Brisbane 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games.
- Simplify procurement for smaller projects to increase small business participation in government procurement.
- Promote opportunities to supply to both government and large businesses.

### 6 Refreshed small business grants program:

- Refresh the scope and delivery of the Queensland Government's small business grants program, including publishing an annual grants schedule, improving application processes and processing times, and improving feedback processes for unsuccessful applicants.

### 7 New guidelines to minimise disruption during infrastructure works:

- Provide practical guidance on working with businesses to reduce disruption and support jobs when undertaking capital works projects.

### 8 Build connections and foster innovation through delivery of an annual Queensland Small Business Month:

- Celebrate small business success, facilitate training opportunities, build connections and foster innovation through networking.

### 9 Deliver the Regional Place Activation Program:

- Work with local councils to activate spaces to create vibrant and thriving places, encouraging users and visitors to stay longer and enjoy the space.

### 10 Support continued engagement with the small business community:

- Continue the Queensland Small Business Advisory Council, which is comprised of small business owners who provide advice to the Minister on significant small business issues.

## Key procurement initiatives



**The Queensland Government SME Procurement Target** has seen procurement spend with Queensland SMEs increase by nearly \$1 billion to \$6.74 billion for the 2022–23 financial year.



**The On-time Payment Policy** is ensuring small businesses supplying to the Queensland Government are paid within 20 calendar days.



**The Queensland Indigenous (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Procurement Policy** focuses on increasing procurement with First Nations businesses to three per cent across all government contracts.



**The Queensland 2032 Procurement Strategy** will help Queensland businesses to get ready to supply in the lead up to the Brisbane 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games.



**Buy Queensland 2023** supports quality, local jobs, boosts the Queensland economy, leaves a lasting positive legacy for current and future generations of Queenslanders and delivers excellent procurement outcomes.



## Grant programs to support a strong small businesses sector

The Queensland Government is committed to supporting businesses across the state to start, grow and thrive.

More than 6,000 small business grants have been awarded, totalling more than \$39 million through our *Big Plans for Small Business* grant programs, including:

- Business Basics grants of \$5,000 for new and emerging businesses to increase core skills and adopt best practice
- Business Boost grants of up to \$20,000 for small businesses to enhance their efficiency and productivity
- Business Growth Fund grants of up to \$75,000 for small and medium-sized businesses to purchase specialised equipment.

The Sunshine Coast's **GeoDrill Australia**, a family-owned business specialising in mineral and coal exploration as well as geotechnical and water drilling services, will use a \$75,000 grant to enhance capabilities of its fleet of three Hydrapower HP850 drilling rigs.

“The **Business Growth Fund** has helped us to prepare and launch a new brand, GD Water Solutions,” GeoDrill Australia Managing Director Thomas Partleton says.

“With GD Water Solutions, we will service rural Queensland, providing end-to-end Water Solutions to Queensland businesses and families.”

The business will engage a Toowoomba-based engineering firm to design, engineer and implement rig enhancements, which will upgrade depth capacity beyond 3,000m and allow the business to remain competitive with interstate drilling rivals.

“The Business Growth Fund allowed us to further enhance the exceptional drilling capacity of our three Queensland-manufactured Hydrapower HP850 drilling rigs.

“Queensland Government support has helped our revenue grow by 44%, allowed us to employ an additional 12 team members over the last year, and it's keeping us competitive.”





### FOCUS AREA 3

## *Building business resilience, capability and workforce*

To help with rising business costs, the Queensland Government will provide small businesses with the tools and access to the workforce they need so they can focus on growing their business.

A leading challenge for small business, particularly in regional and remote areas, is accessing a workforce with the required skills to operate and grow their business and remain competitive.

The Queensland Government is committed to working with small businesses across the state to respond to their unique workforce issues, challenges and opportunities using tailored approaches.

Additionally, recent cyber-attacks have brought cyber security into the spotlight, as well as crime and security more generally. The Queensland Government has committed to supporting businesses to protect themselves from direct or indirect cyber security threats. This builds on the \$200 million investment under ***Our Thriving Digital Future: Queensland's Digital Economy Strategy*** to grow the state's digital economy and improve digital connectivity.

Small businesses are also reporting mental health and resilience as a growing area of concern, with business owners relaying that owning a small business can be stressful and mentally taxing, particularly in the aftermath of natural disasters and extreme weather events.

The Queensland Government is continuing to fund the **Small Business Financial Counsellors** program, to ensure we continue to offer free, one-on-one targeted financial support, including cash flow planning and budgeting. Additionally, our **Small Business Wellness Coaches** can help to address mental health challenges and facilitate direct referrals to specialist providers for additional support.

### Small business workforce planning support

Jobs Queensland's **Workforce Planning Connect** is a suite of free tools and resources designed to support small business to plan their future skills needs by stepping them through the workforce planning process.

Based on Jobs Queensland's Workforce Planning Connect resources, a **free micro-credential** – Workforce Planning for Business – is part of a suite of DESBT funded courses offered by the University of Sunshine Coast. The course is designed to help Queensland businesses develop an agile and flexible workforce plan.

## ACTIONS

### 11 **Extend grant funding support to help small business to address workforce challenges:**

- Invest in additional funding for grants to support small businesses to implement workforce solutions, under the Workforce Connect Fund.

### 12 **Extend Business Chamber Queensland Workforce Evolve Program:**

- Continue the success of the Workforce Evolve Program by continuing to provide employers with access to tailored, fit-for-purpose support to empower them to achieve future-ready, sustainable and inclusive workforces.

### 13 **Continue the Back to Work Program:**

- Continue the delivery of the Back to Work Program to provide assistance to small businesses to attract, employ and retain workers facing disadvantage in the labour market.

### 14 **Deliver a new Cyber Security Support Program:**

- Develop a new cyber security program which will support small business to minimise the incidence and impact of cyber attacks.

### 15 **Support safe retail precincts:**

- Fund a pilot engagement and education campaign, aimed at the retail community to support safer retail precincts and support small business owners.

### 16 **Deliver one-on-one support for small business focused on mental health and financial security:**

- Provide personalised case management support for small business, focused on reducing financial and mental health stressors.

### 17 **Continue the Small Business Financial Counsellors program:**

- Provide additional funding to continue small business financial counsellors for 2024–25, to ensure small businesses can access free one-on-one, targeted financial support, including cash flow planning and budgeting.



## A strong and growing workforce

An initiative of the **Good people. Good jobs: Queensland Workforce Strategy 2022–2032**, the **Industry Workforce Advisor program** provides workforce planning assistance to employers in small and medium-sized businesses, enabling them to address workforce challenges, diversify their workforces, and support workforce growth.

Small businesses work with an Industry Workforce Advisor to develop a Workforce Plan. If the plan identifies an immediate need for new and innovative HR solutions to support their workforce, the business will also be eligible to apply for a **HR Support Grant for Small Business**.

Queenslanders, Stacey and Anthony Phillips, are the proud owners of **Tubie Fun**, a family business specialising in producing high-quality products for children requiring tube feeding. It has grown from a small home-run operation to a small business operating from a commercial premises with a growing client base.

“Tubie Fun started when I couldn’t find the products that I needed for my son. I wanted to get people to celebrate tube feeding and get them involved in their care, give them some control back, and change the conversation around tube feeding and special needs,” says Stacey.

An **Industry Workforce Advisor** assisted Stacey and Anthony to develop a workforce plan for their business, which identified a need for human resources support and advice to continue to grow the business successfully.

Tubie Fun was also approved to receive a \$5,000 HR Support Grant for Small Business to engage a human resources agency to develop a range of foundation materials including policies, procedures, documented instructions, payroll information, formal employment agreements and more.

“Through the HR Support Grant, we have been able to confidently expand our workforce and have the relevant information, policies and procedures in place,” Stacey says.

“I would really encourage other small businesses to reach out to their Industry Workforce Advisor. Being able to learn about all the different programs and grants that you may be eligible for can only benefit your business.”



## What we are currently doing to support small business



Through *Good Jobs. Good People: Queensland Workforce Strategy 2022–2032* small businesses can access a range of workforce support services, including:

- Industry Workforce Advisors
- HR Support Grants for small business
- access to the Diverse Queensland Workforce program
- access to micro-credentialing programs
- new local school industry partnership initiatives, and
- apprentice employer support initiatives.



Small businesses can access the \$25 million **Workforce Connect Fund** for projects that address attraction, retention and participation issues within the workforce.



Small businesses can access the **Train and Retain Program** for help in supporting their apprentices and trainees in their training and workplace, and **Apprenticeships Work for Everyone** which promotes the benefits of apprenticeships and traineeships to Queenslanders.

The Queensland Government's small business grants program enables small businesses to purchase security and safety equipment such as CCTV.

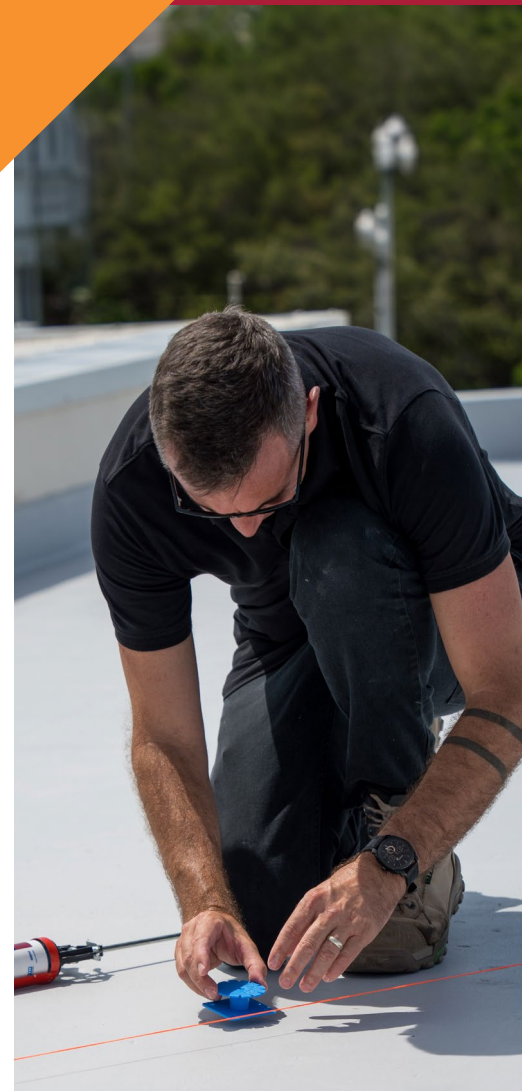


## Mentoring turns opportunities into achievements

The Queensland Government's **Mentoring for Growth** program provides access to volunteer business mentors who provide insights, options and suggestions relating to business opportunities or challenges impacting business growth. Since 2016, Mentoring for Growth has supported more than 3,700 businesses and has a network of over 300 experienced business professionals.

Gold Coast-based business, **Screedex** formed in 2021 to revolutionise the way screeding is done, providing total screed solutions to the building and construction industry Australia-wide and globally. Managing Director, Colin Scougall, attended several mentoring sessions to help turn his concept into a reality during the startup phase of their venture.

"The practical support, combined with the valuable insights of mentors and industry experts, primed us for the dynamic road ahead and at the same time created significant business opportunities and potential for growth," Colin said.



## Natural disaster assistance helping small businesses recover

The Commonwealth and Queensland State Government are jointly investing in a new major \$112 million disaster assistance package to drive the next recovery phase and ensure communities, including small businesses, are better prepared for the next event. The package, jointly funded through Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements, will fund a range of initiatives to support recovery from both the South East Queensland storms and ex-Tropical Cyclone Jasper in Far North Queensland.

This package includes the \$13.4 million Small Business Support Program which will deliver one-on-one case management focused on mental health and financial security, partnerships with councils and chambers of commerce to address local support needs, and grants for small businesses that have lost income due to prolonged isolation.

## Disaster funding fast-tracking business recovery

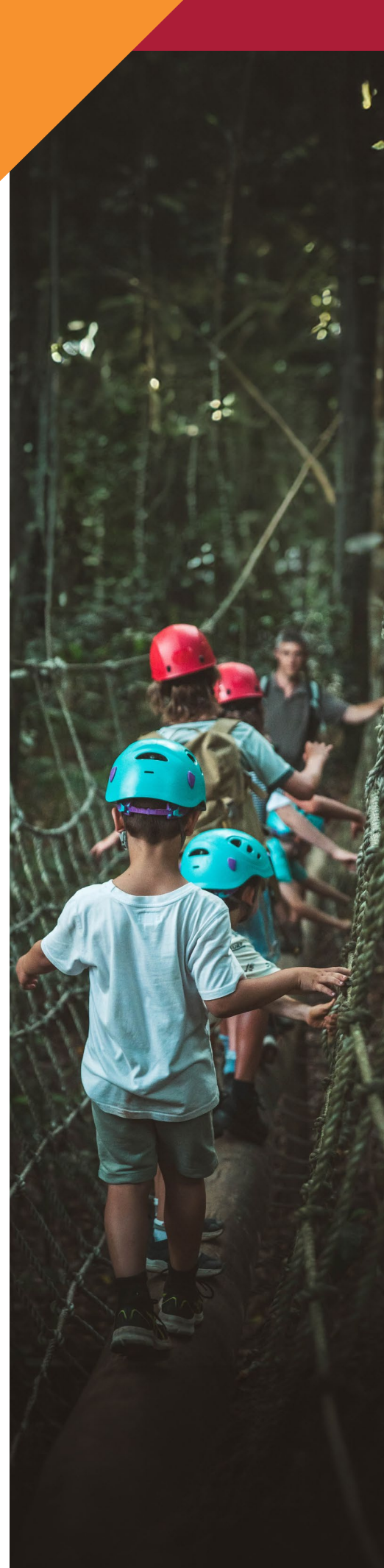
**Cairns Adventure Therapy** specialises in innovative, evidence-based therapies combined with adventure activities in nature. Working beyond traditional therapy settings, the team of mental health practitioners were adversely affected by the flooding events of ex-Tropical Cyclone Jasper. With a loss of equipment and interruption of service delivery due to the impact of a prolonged and intense wet season, owner Jonathan Marshall applied for an **Extraordinary Disaster Assistance Recovery Grant** with the Queensland Rural Industry Development Authority (QRIDA).

“Initially I didn't imagine we would be eligible for the QRIDA grant but went along to the Cairns pop-up recovery hub to explore what support may be available to impacted businesses. There I met the QRIDA program manager Sheree, and she was great in explaining the grant to me and encouraged us to apply.”

Successful in receiving \$10,000, the funds ensured business continuity through equipment replacement and helped Jonathan navigate cash flow challenges caused by the frequent wet weather cancellation of sessions and programs.

“Whilst we have a range of insurances in place covering the services that we offer, we had not taken out insurance protection for the equipment that we had steadily accumulated. Thanks to the recovery grant we were still able to be compensated for our losses,” says Jonathan.

“Our business has successfully applied for three different DESBT grants in the time we have been operating. These have facilitated our future growth and sustainability through enabling us to engage in projects that would not be possible without external funding. I recommend any organisation keep an eye out for grants as they are fantastic opportunities for the strategic development of the business.”





## FOCUS AREA 4

### *Growing diversity*

In response to business cost pressures, the Queensland Government will continue to invest in our vibrant and diverse small business community to help them thrive and create jobs.

Growing a vibrant Indigenous small business sector in Queensland supports increased entrepreneurship and economic participation, and is key to self-empowerment of First Nations peoples. Indigenous businesses play a significant role in local communities and are more likely to create jobs for First Nations peoples than non-Indigenous businesses. Investing in Indigenous businesses supports employment targets under the *National Agreement on Closing the Gap*.

First Nations business owners have called for more mentoring support from government, with a focus on improving capability, and emphasise the importance of relationship-based strategies to support Indigenous small businesses.

Queensland's greatest strength – harnessing the benefits of our diversity and creating equality of opportunity for all Queenslanders from all backgrounds – will help our state's economy to thrive.

Queensland is fortunate to have one of Australia's most decentralised and fast-growing social enterprise sectors. Social enterprises help create jobs and economic opportunities for a range of disadvantaged people, including those living with a disability, refugees and youth and help address access and equity issues for those disadvantaged in the labour market. Social enterprises tend to be place-based and focused on their local communities, providing local solutions to local problems.



***Paving the Way – First Nations Training Strategy*** supports First Nations people's skill development and responds to local employment needs.

## **Making business resources more accessible**

The Queensland Small Business Commissioner has created a range of resources which have been translated into the top four non-English languages in Queensland, to support access to resources for business owners from diverse backgrounds.



## ACTIONS

### 18 Increase support to Queensland Indigenous businesses to grow the sector:

- Extend TAFE Queensland's One Business program to further assist Indigenous business owners and operators to access culturally appropriate and targeted mentoring.
- Extend Principal Indigenous Program Officers to increase Indigenous small business capacity and skills.

### 19 Deliver the Queensland Indigenous Business Network to increase Indigenous small business growth:

- Provide support and advocacy for the growth of Indigenous businesses and work in partnership with local business communities, industry and government to build the economic footprint of Indigenous business in Queensland.

### 20 Deliver social enterprise grants and support sector partnerships:

- Provide grants and support the Queensland Social Enterprise Council for the strong growth and development of the social enterprise sector to deliver economic, social and sustainability benefits to Queensland communities.

## Queensland Indigenous Business Network

Supported by the Queensland Government, the Queensland Indigenous Business Network (QIBN) is an independent organisation led by First Nations peoples to help Indigenous small businesses grow and thrive. It provides services including business mentoring, connecting business to local networks and stakeholders, and enabling a space for Indigenous businesses to collaborate with and learn from each other.



## Supporting Indigenous businesses to grow in capability and capacity

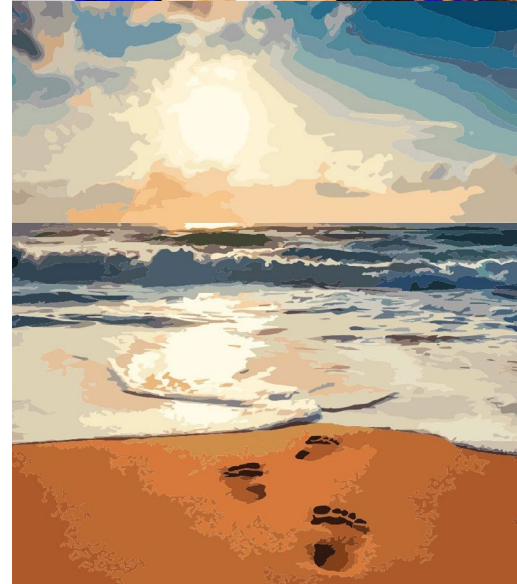
The Deadly Business 2032 project was first delivered in the Far North Queensland region, to encourage and back Indigenous small businesses across the state to grow and succeed. The project focused on facilitating new partnerships, preparing Queensland Indigenous businesses and generating business growth.

The project is part of the \$8.3 million *Paving the Way — First Nations Training Strategy* to develop Queensland's First Nations workforce and improve job outcomes through training and support.

Paulene Burns is a proud Wulgurukaba and Gunggandji woman and traditional owner of Magnetic Island and Palm Islands in Townsville and Yarrabah in North Queensland. Paulene had a dream of owning a successful multifaceted arts business and in 2015 established **Creative Art Book**.

Like many other Indigenous businesses, Paulene had struggled to find the right support to suit her business stage and support business growth. Through the **Deadly Business 2032** initiative, Paulene was introduced to the Gr8motive Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corporation which she engaged with for more than six months, received mentoring and coaching to help unblock barriers and find the right support for her business.

Paulene is further developing her business model to incorporate mini art workshops targeting NDIS participants and school holiday programs. Through these supports, Paulene has built more business confidence and self-belief. She has also enrolled in Indigenous Business Australia online workshops and the Cairns Business Planning Course – delivered by the University of Sunshine Coast and funded by the Deadly Business 2032 project, which is focused on facilitating new partnerships, preparing businesses and generating business growth for Queensland First Nations businesses.



## Indigenous business helping to address housing shortage

When Moreton Bay Region Indigenous business, **Wrightway Painting**, was invited to attend a Mastering Business Planning workshop by the local **Principal Indigenous Program Officer** (PIPO), it was the beginning of a successful business opportunity for owners Josh Wright and Tamara Dean.

Following the workshop, Wrightway Painting attended an **Indigenous Business Connect event**, meeting other First Nations business owners, industry and government procurement representatives, including local builder Murricon Constructions. With the support of the PIPO a successful connection was made, with Wrightway Painting now working with Murricon Constructions to provide painters and trades assistants for their modular homes project.

Through their work on Murricon Constructions' current project – where they are helping to build houses that will provide affordable housing for First Nations families in the Caboolture area – Josh and Tamara's business is not only benefiting from the 1:1 business connection, but they are now part of a broader supply chain that is positively impacting First Nations families in Queensland.



## IMPLEMENTATION

The implementation and delivery of initiatives under the Strategy will be undertaken during the 2024–27 period in a flexible way to ensure the Strategy responds to emerging needs and business changes over time.

The Strategy will be monitored throughout its implementation to ensure the effectiveness of programs and alignment to outcomes.

Department of Employment, Small Business and Training

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