

# Queensland small business strategy and action plan 2013–2015

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## Foreword

**It is undisputed that the last five years have been tough for Queensland businesses. The state has faced a number of significant challenges—on both economic and environmental fronts—and small businesses have been particularly vulnerable.**

Queensland's 412 000 small businesses span every industry sector. They are the foundation of our regional and rural communities, and the driving force of Queensland innovation, employment and economic progress.

A plan to support and stimulate the growth of small businesses is critical to the government's agenda to build a more productive and resilient Queensland economy.

Over the last 12 months, the Queensland Government has made substantial progress in getting small businesses back on track by lowering payroll tax, reducing red tape and embarking on an ambitious reform of the skills and training system. It is imperative, however, that the momentum continues.

The *Queensland small business strategy and action plan 2013–2015* outlines the government's policy directions and actions for the next two years. Approximately \$1 million in redirected savings for new initiatives will directly assist small businesses, microbusinesses and non-employed firms.

This is the first coordinated plan for small businesses in recent years, and the Queensland Government is committed to working with the business community and our industry partners to secure the future prosperity of small businesses in our state.

Hon Campbell Newman MP  
Premier

Hon Jann Stuckey MP  
Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Small Business  
and the Commonwealth Games



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# Introduction

At the heart of the Queensland economy are the state's 412 000<sup>1</sup> small businesses<sup>2</sup>. They represent over 96% of businesses statewide and employ approximately 50% of all private sector workers.

Small businesses are in every Queensland community and region, and deliver a diverse range of goods and services across all industry sectors. They complement the economic activity of large organisations and are a key part of the supply chains of larger projects. Small businesses power regional development and are the gateway through which many people enter the economy—many are the larger businesses of tomorrow.

Today's small businesses face a range of challenges. Global economic uncertainty, a high Australian dollar, poor consumer confidence, the burden of red tape, skills and labour supply issues and the increasing costs of doing

business all impact on productivity and business survival, and in turn on families and communities.

However, there are also significant opportunities. The Queensland Government is committed to growing our four pillar industries—tourism, agriculture, resources and construction. Small businesses are critical to these industries and their supply chains, and will be able to tap into considerable flow-on business and employment as these pillars regain strength.

For example, the Commonwealth Games (being held on the Gold Coast in 2018) will provide an important opportunity to stimulate demand and small business

growth in the local Gold Coast economy. In addition, it will create statewide opportunities through new market prospects, access to the supply chains of infrastructure projects, and the broad range of goods and services that will be required to host the Commonwealth Games.

Small business must also focus greater attention on the opportunities presented by the increasingly globalised and technology-intensive business environment to become more efficient, innovative, productive and competitive, and to access information, new ideas and new markets around Australia and the world.

<sup>1</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics 2011, 8165.0—Counts of Australian businesses, including entries and exits, Jun 2007 to Jun 2011, Australian Bureau of Statistics, Canberra.

<sup>2</sup> The Australian Bureau of Statistics defines small business as a business employing less than 20 people. Categories of small businesses include:

- non-employed businesses—sole proprietorships and partnerships without employees
- micro businesses—businesses employing less than five people, including non-employed businesses
- other small businesses—businesses employing five or more people, but less than 20 people.



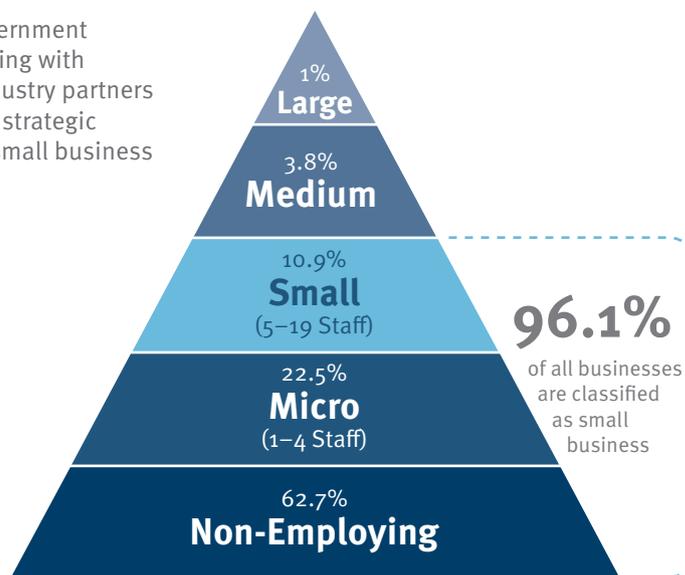
The Queensland Government recognises its role, as both a leader and partner, to help small businesses address these challenges and seize these opportunities. It has embarked on a program of initiatives to establish and sustain a robust economic environment in which to conduct business—it will put in place training and skills pathways, create a business-friendly regulatory environment, and encourage private investment, entrepreneurship, innovation and improved technology uptake.

The Department of Tourism, Major Events, Small Business and the Commonwealth Games will deliver relevant information and support to businesses. It will also connect with the business community to provide a voice for small businesses in government decision-making.

The *Queensland small business strategy and action plan 2013–2015* builds on the government’s efforts to date, and articulates the policy directions and actions to be delivered over the next two years.

The Queensland Government is committed to working with stakeholders and industry partners in a coordinated and strategic approach to getting small business back on track.

Queensland business by number of staff (%)



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics 8165.0 Counts of Australian Businesses including entries and exits, June 2007 to June 2011.



# Priorities and actions



Underpinning the strategy and action plan is a vision for profitable, innovative and resilient small business enterprises that are competitive, create jobs and contribute to building a robust and diversified economy. The government aims to achieve this vision through the implementation of actions identified under five priorities: lower unemployment, make it easier to do business, increase opportunities, stronger business-government engagement, and maximise business potential.

<b>Vision</b>	<b>Profitable, innovative and resilient small business enterprises that are competitive, create jobs and contribute to building a robust and diversified economy</b>
<b>Priorities</b>	<b>Goals</b>
<b>Lower unemployment</b>	<i>Increase employment opportunities and improve skills of jobseekers and existing employees</i>
<b>Make it easier to do business</b>	<i>Develop a well-balanced and efficient regulatory environment that supports business productivity and makes it easier for businesses to understand what is required</i>
<b>Increase opportunities</b>	<i>Improve access to major projects and new business opportunities</i>
<b>Stronger business–government engagement</b>	<i>Engage with businesses to inform policy decisions</i>
<b>Maximise business potential</b>	<i>Deliver relevant business-to-government support services that equip businesses with the knowledge to grow, increase productivity, improve connectivity and encourage greater technology uptake</i>

## Lower unemployment

**Goal:** Increase employment opportunities and improve skills of jobseekers and existing employees

The government is committed to achieving 4% unemployment by 2018. The key to encouraging more business activity, and in turn jobs creation, is to lower the cost of doing business and have a skilled and productive workforce that meets the current and future needs of industry and the community.

### Priority actions

- **Payroll tax relief:** In July 2012, the government increased the payroll tax exemption threshold from \$1 million to \$1.1 million—as a result, 90% of Queensland employers were exempt from payroll tax.
- **Skills and training reform:** In June 2012, the government established the Skills and Training Taskforce to provide recommendations on key reforms to the Queensland skills and training system. In response to these recommendations, the government will release a Vocational Education and Training (VET) action plan by mid 2013, detailing a vision for Queensland's skills and training sector. The VET action plan will outline the government's commitment to focusing training on job outcomes, transforming VET investment, renewing TAFE Queensland and reforming trade skill pathways in order to revamp and modernise Queensland's VET sector.
- **Additional apprenticeships:** As part of the reform of the skills and training system, \$86 million will be allocated to the creation of 10 000 additional apprenticeship places over six years.
- **Regional training assistance:** Department of Education, Training and Employment regional offices will be refocused to promote apprenticeship pathways and provide ongoing support and assistance to apprentices and employers once a training contract is in place.



## Make it easier to do business

**Goal:** Develop a well-balanced and efficient regulatory environment that supports business productivity and makes it easier for businesses to understand what is required

The government is committed to cutting red tape by 20% across state government agencies, and simplifying how business is done in Queensland. Already, more than 300 specific red tape reduction reforms are in train—many focused on streamlining regulatory processes and reducing compliance and reporting requirements, levies and charges for smaller firms across a variety of industries. The government has also repealed the \$35 per tonne commercial waste levy, providing savings for business.

Over the next two years, this work at the state level will continue to deliver further reforms for small businesses.

### Priority actions

- **Office of Best Practice Regulation:** To implement the target of a 20% reduction in the burden of regulation, the government has established the independent Office of Best Practice Regulation (OBPR) within the Queensland Competition Authority. The OBPR has developed a framework for reducing

the burden of regulation, which determines how the regulatory burden is to be measured, sets regulatory reduction targets for government agencies, and identifies priority areas for targeted regulatory review.

- **Regulatory Impact Statement system:** The government has increased the rigour with which new regulation is made. A Regulatory Impact Statement (RIS) is required for all regulatory proposals that are deemed to have a significant impact on business, the community or government. The independent OBPR now has responsibility for advising if a RIS is required in relation to regulatory proposals, and government departments are required to submit a RIS to the OBPR for assessment of its adequacy before releasing it for consultation.
- **Red tape offset:** Queensland Government ministers will now be required to provide up to three options to reduce or 'offset' regulatory burden for any proposal that will impose a new regulation or procedure on small businesses.
- **Green tape reduction:** The Green Tape Reduction project is being implemented to simplify and improve the licensing processes under the *Environmental Protection Act 1994*, while maintaining environmental outcomes. The project takes a two-pronged approach to reducing administrative burden on businesses. Firstly, it reduces the number of business activities that require an environmental licence. Secondly, it

simplifies the application process and provides greater certainty for those remaining businesses that require a licence. The deletion of 20 environmentally relevant activity thresholds means that more than 9000 small business operators are no longer required to hold a licence, saving an estimated \$6.18 million in annual fees.

Other lower risk, environmentally relevant activities that meet set eligibility criteria can now be automatically approved to operate under standard conditions. Small businesses will receive the most benefit from standard applications, making it easier and cheaper for businesses across a range of industries to obtain particular environmental approvals.

Legislation has also been amended to reduce green tape for small mining businesses. Under this package of reforms, low-risk and low-impact small-scale opal and gemstone mining operations on a mining claim will not be required to hold an environmental authority. Removing the environmental authority requirement will benefit smaller operations, as they will no longer need to make an application, pay annual fees or comply with ongoing administrative requirements. These reforms strike the right balance between stimulating small business growth and maintaining responsible mineral resource stewardship.

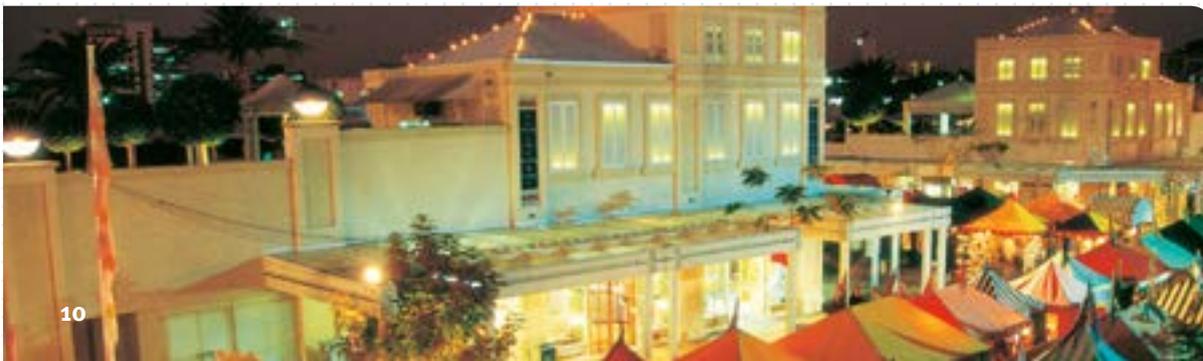
- **Streamlining mining approvals:** The government is currently rolling out MyMinesOnline—an integrated online lodgement system for mining permits and associated environmental licensing applications. The system modernises outdated paper-based tenure administration and will reduce assessment times of resource projects without compromising assessment rigour. Through MyMinesOnline, small mining operations will benefit from less cost and paperwork, enabling them to spend more time running their businesses.
- **Fair trading reform:** The government is reforming fair trading policy and regulation to reduce red tape and provide a more streamlined and simplified environment in which small businesses can operate. As part of this work, the *Property Agents and Motor Dealers Act 2000* will be split into industry-specific legislation, thereby creating a regulatory

environment in which small business will have legislation tailored to their industry. The government will also work with industry and the community to identify and eliminate unnecessary or outdated obligations, paperwork and other requirements that add time and cost to a small business.

- **Business online services:** The government will continue to work with federal and state governments to implement the Australian Business Licence and Information Service (ABLIS) and Australian Business Account (ABA). These two services are available through the Queensland Government’s online business and industry portal ([www.business.qld.gov.au](http://www.business.qld.gov.au)). ABLIS provides a unified online entry point for Queensland small businesses to make it simpler and quicker to search for, apply and comply with regulatory requirements across all three tiers of government. The ABA will become the single location for

business to transact with government and manage their ongoing regulatory requirements. This will save businesses time and money when complying with regulations—keeping up to date with regulatory changes and pre-filling application forms with their core details from the ABA.

- **Paying bills on time:** All bills from suppliers to government involving contracts of up to \$1 million will be paid within 30 days. All departments’ performance in meeting this commitment will be monitored and, where obligations are not met, a penalty system may be imposed.



# Increase opportunities

Goal: Improve access to major projects and new business opportunities

The major government projects planned for Queensland, including the Gold Coast 2018 Commonwealth Games, will provide a boost to small businesses across the state through new business opportunities and access to major project supply chains. The government is putting in place a range of initiatives to stimulate sustainable growth and help small businesses position themselves to get their fair share of work.

## Priority actions

- **Government procurement:** The government will continue to support small business access to government procurement opportunities through the requirement for agencies to ensure that competitive local suppliers are given a full, fair and reasonable opportunity to supply the Queensland Government. This is reflected in the state procurement policy and local industry policy. The government will identify opportunities to further enhance small business access to, and use of, the eTender website.

The government will also help small businesses gain greater access to the Queensland Government market through the ICT Small and Medium Enterprise participation scheme. The scheme provides scope for Queensland Government agencies to invite competitive offers from innovative small to medium-sized information and communications technology firms to supply products and services to the government.

- **Industry Capability Network:** The government will work with local government authorities and project proponents to provide opportunities for small businesses to tap into major projects (such as the Gold Coast 2018 Commonwealth Games), supported by the Industry Capability Network (ICN). The ICN will help identify and inform small businesses of procurement opportunities—profiling and promoting Queensland industry capability, and matching businesses to specific opportunities.
- **Black Business Finder:** The government will continue to work with the ICN to deliver the Black Business Finder—an online database established to give Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses an opportunity to be involved in and benefit from the expanding program of major projects currently

underway in Queensland. The database links to the ICN's comprehensive national listing of major projects throughout Queensland, and helps project proponents source Indigenous businesses to provide goods and services.

- **Small business capability improvement:** An information and education program will be delivered to inform and prepare businesses to develop tenders for government-funded procurement opportunities, build their capacity and collaborate to access new markets. The program will include online webinars and information for businesses to understand their capability, building on the government's ongoing 'Tendering for government business' workshops.
- **Encourage local buying from Queensland businesses:** A 'Think Queensland, buy locally' campaign has been established to encourage communities to purchase goods and services from local businesses. The campaign supports the government's recovery plans following the 2013 natural disasters, and encourages consumers to stimulate business and help rebuild local economies by buying locally.

# Stronger business–government engagement

Goal: Engage with businesses to inform policy decisions

Through the Minister and Department of Tourism, Major Events, Small Business and the Commonwealth Games, the government will engage and consult with Queensland small businesses to keep them informed on important programs and policies, and will act as an advocate for small business issues and concerns in Queensland.

## Priority actions

- **Queensland Small Business Advisory Council:** The Queensland Small Business Advisory Council has been re-established to advise the government on significant small business issues. Through the council, the government will maintain an ongoing dialogue with the small business community to identify and investigate ideas and solutions that encourage and support their growth, prosperity and employment.

- **National Small Business Summit:** The government will work with the Council of Small Business of Australia to stage the National Small Business Summit in Brisbane in 2013. The summit will present a key opportunity for government and business engagement, and is a vital forum for discussing the critical issues facing small businesses across Australia.
- **Queensland Small Business Week:** To promote the importance of small business to the Queensland economy, the government will hold the inaugural Queensland Small Business Week in conjunction with the National Small Business Summit. During the week of 24–31 July 2013, small business owners and operators will have the opportunity to hear new ideas, connect with other businesses and access information to help them grow and become more resilient. Events, workshops and seminars will be held across Queensland in cooperation with industry partners.
- **Small Business Officials Group:** Through its membership on the national Small Business Officials Group, the government will continue to represent Queensland small businesses in cross-jurisdictional

discussions and influence the federal small business policy agenda to benefit Queensland.

- **Increase awareness:** A campaign to raise business awareness of Queensland Government services will be developed to ensure small businesses are directed to the right information and assistance. The campaign will seek to attract small businesses to engage with the government through the business and industry portal ([www.business.qld.gov.au](http://www.business.qld.gov.au)), and to connect to the large range of services available.
- **Small business events calendar:** An online calendar of events will be developed to connect businesses with the range of relevant government and industry activities on offer across the state. The calendar will be available through the government's business and industry portal ([www.business.qld.gov.au](http://www.business.qld.gov.au)), with a supporting mobile application to enable businesses to find out what's happening in their area quickly and easily.



# Maximise business potential

**Goal:** Deliver relevant business-to-government support services that equip businesses with the knowledge to grow, increase productivity, improve connectivity and encourage greater technology uptake

For small businesses to grow and become more productive, they need the right management skills, knowledge and connections. The government will deliver the services to equip businesses to succeed.

## Priority actions

- **Business-to-government services:** Information, referral services and capability-building initiatives will be delivered to help small businesses maximise their business potential. Building business capacity, connecting to new ideas and partners, accessing new customers and markets, and strengthening management skills are all critical areas of small business development. Business-to-government services will be provided through the government's proposed one-stop shop—a seamless, integrated single point of entry to online, telephone and counter-based services.
- **Online business and industry portal ([www.business.qld.gov.au](http://www.business.qld.gov.au))**—The government delivers online business support through the business and industry portal, with more than 400 business customer service pathways. Businesses logging on via their Australian Business Account are provided with information tailored specifically to their business activities and location to help them set up, expand and manage their business.
- **Telephone service (13 QGOV)**—The government's 13 QGOV (13 74 68) telephone service provides one number for individuals and businesses to contact the Queensland Government and get access to a full range of government services. The number is available 24/7 and connects callers to a customer service adviser who will either complete the service or ensure seamless access to the right assistance.
- **Regional offices**—A network of state government regional offices is positioned to support the delivery of capability-building programs and other business development opportunities, which will help small businesses grow and prosper.
- **Workshops**—The government runs interactive 'Tendering for government business' workshops across the state, providing information and practical tools to help businesses tender for government procurement opportunities. The workshops are suitable for Queensland businesses wanting more information about government tendering opportunities and the art of developing and submitting winning tenders.
- **Webinars**—Using the latest technology, the government will continue to deliver informational and educational web-based seminars to help businesses get established, build capability and skills, become more resilient and take advantage of opportunities to grow.
- **Mentoring**—The government will continue the Mentoring for Growth Program with the support of business experts and professionals from the private sector. The program helps enterprises in growth mode by providing access to a panel of business mentors who can help address commercial challenges.
- **Export advisory services:** Through Trade and Investment Queensland, the government will continue to provide export-related support and upskilling programs to small businesses in rural and regional Queensland. These services extend through the government's overseas network, where Queensland small businesses can obtain tailored assistance in markets where a state government presence is maintained. Outside these locations, the government will continue to work closely with Austrade and other government and industry partners to help small businesses develop export and investment opportunities.

- **Innovation in small business:**

The government will continue to support innovation in small business.

- The government will provide an environment for start-up and early-stage firms that is conducive to high growth. The government is in partnership with four incubators that provide start-up firms with the resources necessary to support them during this challenging phase.
- The Queensland-Wide Innovation Network (Q-WIN) provides small to medium enterprises with the opportunity to connect with other like-minded businesses and government and private sector support providers to help their business grow. Q-WIN helps businesses get ahead of their competition through innovation—delivered through the Innovation Toolbox, Innovation Coaches and a collaborative network of service providers.
- The government delivers and supports a number of mentoring and coaching programs to guide businesses through the innovation process and encourage entrepreneurship.

Mentoring or coaching can help businesses take full advantage of new ideas and implement them effectively.

- The government will provide opportunities for small businesses to search and access government datasets via the Queensland Government’s online data portal ([www.qld.gov.au/data](http://www.qld.gov.au/data)) to encourage innovative new services and solutions for the state, such as the development of new applications and programs.
- **Digital readiness:** Through access to the internet and high-speed broadband, small businesses have an extraordinary opportunity to transform the way they work and how they provide goods and services, and to access new and broader markets. The government will help small businesses make the most of the digital economy.
  - The government will provide online resources for businesses looking to establish or develop their digital presence and capacity.
  - The government will link small businesses to Queensland digital services firms through the information and communications technology business directory. This

includes engagement through industry associations and social media platforms, chambers of commerce, local councils, regional economic development organisations and the Regional Development Australia network.

- The government is coordinating education and information sessions regarding broadband and the digital economy. This includes raising awareness of new markets for regional businesses that embrace digital opportunities.
- The government will showcase Queensland firms and applications that demonstrate innovative and best use of high-speed broadband. Case studies will be developed to demonstrate how small businesses can become digital-ready.
- The government will work with councils and regional economic development organisations to ensure that awareness and benefits of high-speed broadband are widely and equitably available to businesses, to enable them to maximise the benefits of engagement with the digital economy.

- **Safer business environment:** The government will continue to help small businesses manage health and safety in their operations by working closely with Workplace Health and Safety Queensland (WHSQ). WHSQ provides a range of free advisory services, guidance material and online tools to assist Queensland industry. Practical workshops, onsite consultations and initiatives to improve procedures are available to help small businesses learn how to systematically manage their health and safety issues, which in turn helps improve productivity and growth.
- **Supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses:** The government will release an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander economic participation framework to support the growth of a wide range of small and medium-sized Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned and operated businesses in urban, regional and remote areas of

Queensland. The framework will include initiatives to mentor new businesses, increase opportunities for joint ventures and private-public sector commercial partnerships, and support the establishment of trade-based businesses and local enterprises across a range of industries, with a focus on tourism, resources, agriculture and construction.

- **Tourism Service Quality Toolkit:** The government will help tourism businesses to develop service excellence strategies through the online Tourism Service Quality Toolkit. The toolkit provides information on a number of direct actions businesses can take to improve their service quality (including exercises and case studies), and connects businesses to resources and guides available on the business and industry portal ([www.business.qld.gov.au](http://www.business.qld.gov.au)) to help tourism businesses grow.

- **T-Qual accreditation:** The government is working in partnership with Tourism and Events Queensland and the Queensland Tourism Industry Council to facilitate uptake of the national T-Qual accreditation by Queensland tourism businesses. T-Qual accreditation is an important step towards improving the quality of Queensland tourism products and maximising the ability of tourism businesses to grow successfully into the future.
- **Integrating service delivery:** The Department of Tourism, Major Events, Small Business and the Commonwealth Games is developing an integrated service delivery mechanism to manage the department's interactions with current and future business clients. The mechanism will help improve delivery of and access to the government's business services, and will promote a stronger understanding of small business needs.





# Summary

Small businesses are important to Queensland. The government is creating the economic environment that will deliver more opportunities for small businesses—through a balanced budget, jobs creation and increased productivity.

The *Queensland small business strategy and action plan 2013–2015* builds on this work and continues the momentum of helping Queensland small businesses realise their potential and be a part of a strong and sustainable economic future.

For more information on initiatives outlined in this plan, visit the business and industry portal ([www.business.qld.gov.au](http://www.business.qld.gov.au)) or call 13 QGOV (13 74 68).

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For more information, contact:  
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