



## RED TAPE IN SMALL BUSINESS: ISSUES AND SOLUTIONS

### WORKSHOP REPORT

On 23 September 2009, Gulf Savannah Development and Tablelands Futures Corporation delivered a *Red Tape in Small Business* workshop, in response to repeated complaints about red tape to the Gulf Savannah/ Tablelands Small Business Advisory Service.

A number of small businesses provided written input into the workshop and fifteen people attended the workshop held in Atherton, including:

- the Hon. Jan Jarratt MP, Parliamentary Secretary for Employment, Economic Development and Innovation and Chair of the Queensland Small Business Advisory Council
- Councillors Rhonda Sorenson and Jenny Jensen from the Tablelands Regional Council
- representatives from peak organisations such as Gulf Savannah Development, Tablelands Futures Corporation, and the Mareeba Fruit and Vegetable Producers Association
- representatives from State Departments DEEDI and DERM
- small business owners and managers.

A host of specific examples of red tape were identified by workshop participants. Five recurring, generic red tape issues were then identified:

- inappropriate forms
- lack of information and education for the small business community when new regulations are made
- duplication across different agencies
- 'one-size-fits-all' regulations or over-regulation
- a suite of issues affecting the food industry.

The workshop then proceeded to identify possible solutions to these generic issues.

ISSUE	SOLUTIONS
Inappropriate forms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• online forms need to be better designed and more user-friendly: public service needs better awareness of software programmes to create on-line forms</li><li>• better coordination across all levels of government so that the same information is not sought several times from small business: government departments need to share information</li><li>• forms should be in plain English</li><li>• forms should be tested on a sample client group before they are rolled out</li><li>• include, with each form, a suggestion/ feedback section on the quality of the form so that they can be constantly improved</li></ul>

ISSUE	SOLUTIONS
Lack of information and education for the small business community when new regulations are made	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• there needs to be a ‘culture shift’ for the public service, including training and awareness in regards red tape issues</li> <li>• there needs to be a commitment by government that the public service has a role not just in creating regulation, but also in enabling and helping businesses to adapt to regulations and helping businesses to participate in government processes</li> <li>• small business can use peak bodies and regional groups to address red tape issues they encounter</li> <li>• checklist for public service in regard to how they educate and disseminate information on new regulations</li> <li>• public service to have more people in field roles working with business and industry rather than in ‘head office’ roles: this requires a public service restructure</li> <li>• one-on-one help available to small businesses to adapt to change and participate in government processes: small business field officers a very important tool in this regard (currently not funded by the State)</li> <li>• reliance on on-line tools to disseminate information and educate the business community is not appropriate, particularly in rural areas</li> </ul>
Duplication across different agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• investigate the feasibility of mutli-purpose forms which can be used by multiple agencies/ departments, rather than each agency/ department having their own form</li> <li>• reduce duplication of inspections across State and local governments</li> <li>• better consultation to avoid perverse or ‘unintended’ outcomes that result from government initiatives</li> <li>• State needs to be careful not to over-ride local governments: the latter generally have better local knowledge</li> </ul>
‘One-size-fits-all’ regulations or over-regulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• rural impact assessments should be compulsory for government when they develop new policy/ regulation (environmental impact assessments are already required)</li> <li>• review composition of Committees that develop new regulations: are they truly representative?</li> <li>• need intellectual rigour when developing new regulation: is it really necessary, what are the options to regulation? Public service to use a checklist in this regard</li> <li>• review conditional registration requirements for vehicles</li> <li>• community need to provide a cohesive message to Government</li> <li>• nature conservation regulations are ‘over-the-top’ and not always focussed on core environmental issues (eg: weed infestations)</li> </ul>
A range of issues affecting the food industry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• undertake a review of Safe Food</li> <li>• one single certification system for chain stores</li> <li>• licensing costs need to be appropriate to the size of the business: use a sliding scale</li> <li>• re-evaluate the number and type of licences for food</li> </ul>

	<p>production/ manufacture</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ICA: more streamlined process to devolve information from Qld DPI to accredited businesses/ whole of licensing process</li> <li>• review audit fees under SafeFood: these are inappropriate</li> <li>• change the audit process: inspections should relate to food</li> <li>• negotiate with Department of Main Roads regarding food tourism industry signage</li> <li>• review requirement that food produced for community events has to come from commercial kitchens</li> <li>• working visas to be included in the TFN registration</li> <li>• review regulations about employment of under-18 year olds on farms: this impacts on community and family employment especially in school holidays</li> </ul>
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The Hon. Jan Jarratt MP outlined the State Government's commitment to address red tape issues, including the establishment of an Office for Regulatory Efficiency within Treasury and actions being undertaken with Federal and other State/ Territory Ministers. She thanked participants for their inputs and undertook to take these issues and solutions up within Treasury and to investigate the options for a full review of the situation facing the food industry.

Gulf Savannah Development and Tablelands Futures Corporation thanked the Hon. Jan Jarratt MP for her interest in these red tape issues and for her valued participation in the workshop, and undertook to communicate with stakeholders regarding workshop outcomes. The support of the Federal Government's AusIndustry programme in funding to deliver the workshop was also acknowledged.

*Gulf Savannah Development  
30 September 2009*