

PAEC Inquiry into the 2018-19 Budget Estimates – Questions taken on notice and further information agreed to be supplied at the hearing

Minister Dalidakis, Small Business, Friday 1 June 2018

Question 1

How much of the \$2.1 million that was allocated last year was spent on farm mediation?

Response

Farm debt mediation is an important service supporting Victorian farmers who are undertaking financial mediation with creditors. In the 2016-17 State Budget, \$2.1 million was allocated to fund the Victorian Small Business Festival and the Victorian Small Business Commission, which included funding to continue to provide farm debt mediation services through the Victorian Small Business Commission. This includes arranging mediations and maintaining a list of external mediators throughout Victoria. In 2016-17, the Commission spent \$380,353 to provide farm debt mediation services.

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Question 2

The 2018-19 Budget Paper No.3 (p. 27) lists a \$500,000 asset initiative to support Victorian small business. Please provide a full breakdown of what the \$500,000 was spent on including any refurbishment or changes to the Small Business Commissioner's office, website access etc.

Response

The Victorian Small Business Commission has been allocated a capital budget of \$500,000 for 2018-19. The budget allocation will enable the Commission to support Victorian businesses to improve their digital pathways and resolve disputes. As part of this investment, mediation rooms will be renovated and equipped with touchscreens to enable improved document use, and small businesses will have the option to video conference before and after mediation.

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Question 3

- a) What funding and assistance was provided by Small Business Victoria or the Small Business Commissioner to small cleaning businesses affected by changes to Department of Education and Training contracting arrangements?
- b) What additional funding has been provided to Small Business Victoria or the Small Business Commissioner by the Department of Education and Training or from other sources to deliver assistance to small cleaning businesses affected by the changes?

Response

a)

As the policy change and contracts are implemented by the Department of Education and Training your question should be re-directed to the Minister responsible, the Hon James Merlino MP.

b)

As per above.

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Question 4

As the Department of Education and Training has tendered out the school cleaning contracts to eight large businesses “putting a lot of small businesses out of work and a lot of people in a difficult position”, does the Government have any intention to review the Victorian industry procurement policy?

Response

The Minister for Industry and Employment, the Hon Ben Carroll MP, is responsible for both the policy development and implementation of the Victorian Industry Participation Policy, and thus you should re-direct this question to him.

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Question 5

Please provide further details of the Small Business Mentoring Service and the eight businesses that attended the workshops.

Response

The Department of Education and Training contracted the Small Business Mentoring Service to undertake work on their behalf. Thus, it remains a contractual relationship between those two parties, which my department has no sight over. I recommend you re-direct your question to the responsible Minister, the Hon James Merlino MP.

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Question 6

How much was spent on the small business festival and what was the return on investment/economic benefits from this initiative?

Response

The Small Business Festival is a program of nearly 600 events that are relevant to small businesses, including workshops, training, seminars and networking. In 2017, the Festival consisted of 588 events, with over half of these held in regional and rural Victoria. The events are either low-cost or entirely free, with all but a handful of events organised by external event hosts and trainers.

Small Business Victoria's (SBV) organisation and management of the Festival is entirely non-profit. Proceeds of non-SBV events are held by their respective event hosts, who use the money to pay for their speakers, venue and other costs. The 2017 Small Business Festival cost \$1.4 million, however, we see it as an investment in the small business communities right across the state.

An evaluation of the most recent Small Business Festival found:

- more than 27,000 participants attended the 588 events across Victoria
- 70 per cent of attendees reported increased confidence in business prospects
- 59 per cent reported having expanded their business networks
- a proportion of post-festival survey respondents indicated that the Festival event(s) directly assisted in increasing business turnover (23.9 per cent) and increasing the total number of employee hours and/or the number of employees (9.9 per cent).

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Question 7

Please provide details on the number of female run businesses from the 50,000 small businesses that Small Business Victoria helped in 2016–17.

Response

Ensuring that Victorian women have the resources they need to start and grow their businesses is a priority for the Andrews Government. The Small Business Festival is a key component of this focus, providing opportunities for business owners to exchange ideas, access free or low-cost information and support and establish valuable professional networks. In 2017 the Festival was attended by more than 27,000 people, many of who were Victorian women.

The Small Business Buses and Workshops also provide valuable assistance to Victorian women, at every stage of their business journey. The Small Business Bus has made 388 visits to locations around the state, helping more than 1,491 individuals with mentoring and 6,300 individuals with business information.

The Small Business Workshops have seen a strong participation from Victorian women across the 319 sessions that have been held. The workshops have covered 26 business topics, including the *Start Your Own Business in Victoria* session. Many women who have participated in these sessions have been partnered with a professional mentor to help them take their business to the next level.