

## 5.5. SMALL BUSINESS FRIENDLY COUNCILS CHARTER

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### RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council:

- 1. Agrees to join the Queensland Government’s Small Business Friendly Councils initiative and signs the Small Business Friendly Councils Charter; and**
- 2. Delegates authority under Section 257 of the *Local Government Act 2009* to the Chief Executive Officer to deal with any matters arising from the implementation of the Charter.**

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### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Council has been approached by the Queensland Small Business Commissioner (QSBC) to join the Small Business Friendly Councils (SBFC) initiative.

The QSBC is requesting Councils demonstrate their commitment to being mindful of small businesses, their issues and priorities when making decisions for the local community by signing up to a Charter as a “Small Business Friendly Council”.

The Charter is a non-legally binding set of commitments which councils can agree to in support of a prosperous small business sector within their community.

Small businesses are at the heart of the Douglas economy and Council’s support for the sector is recognised in Douglas Shire Council’s Economic Development Strategy 2021-2024.

Council Officers have reviewed the Charter and assessed the benefits and implications of being involved.

### BACKGROUND

The SBFC initiative recognises local Councils that are actively supporting small businesses in their region and helping small businesses recover and build resilience following disasters and economic challenges.

Small businesses are at the heart of the Queensland economy and regional communities. They create local jobs, grow the local economy, and provide essential goods and services but just as importantly, small businesses help create attractive, liveable communities. They foster civic pride and help attract people and investment into the area. In the face of unprecedented natural disasters and the economic effects of the COVID-19 global pandemic, it is vital that local Councils support their small businesses to survive and thrive.

Douglas Shire’s Economic Profile (.id 2020), shows that the Douglas Shire has 1377 locally owned businesses, over which 97% are small businesses.

**Top five industry sectors:**

1. Construction and Trades
2. Agriculture, Forestry (includes horticulture and landscaping) and Fishing
3. Rental, Hiring (includes property management) and Real Estate Services
4. Accommodation and Food Services
5. Professional, Scientific and Technical Services

**COMMENT**

The Douglas Shire Council's Economic Development Strategy 2021-2024 and core remit of several Council departments largely covers off on the services/functions outlined in the new Queensland Government initiative, however by signing up to the new program Council agrees to:

- Communicate and engage with small business;
- Raise the profile and capability of small businesses;
- Support small business resilience and recovery;
- Simplify administration and regulation for small business (red tape reduction);
- Ensure fair procurement and prompt payment terms for small businesses;
- Develop and promote place-based programs for small businesses;
- Promote and showcase small businesses; and
- Measure and report on our performance.

Further details on these commitments are set in the Charter itself (Attachment 1).

Council Officers recommend that Council join the Charter. Key benefits of doing so include:

1. Supports the delivery of the Douglas Shire Economic Development Strategy 2021-2024.
2. Demonstrates Council's commitment to engage proactively and effectively with small businesses, particularly in response to COVID-19.
3. Recognises the importance of, and the value, that small businesses bring to the region.
4. Marketing opportunity to retain existing small businesses in the Douglas Shire.
5. Access to collective marketing opportunities promoted by Queensland Government through the initiative.
6. Enhanced promotion of the Douglas Shire to new small businesses looking to establish or relocate in the area.
7. Potentially increases communication and information sharing across Council departments in delivering on the commitments in the Charter.

A ceremonial signing event involving the Commissioner, Maree Adshead, may be arranged to launch the initiative if Council agrees to join.

There is also an opportunity to sign the Charter in partnership with the Douglas Chamber of Commerce and many of the tools will be made available to the Chamber and other advocacy bodies for dissemination to their members.

## PROPOSAL

The proposal that Council:

1. Agrees to join the Queensland Government's Small Business Friendly Councils initiative and signs the Small Business Friendly Councils Charter; and
2. Delegates authority under Section 257 of the *Local Government Act 2009* to the Chief Executive Officer to deal with any matters arising from the implementation of the Charter.

## FINANCIAL/RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial costs associated with signing up to the Charter however within the Charter are several requirements Council would be encouraged to address, meet and report on which could require some level of resourcing/administration.

Time would be required from Council's Tourism and Economic Development Officers to oversee implementation and annual reporting. This can be accommodated within existing resources.

## RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

Whilst not legally binding, if Council joins the Charter there would be an expectation within the small business community that Council would actively seek to deliver on the commitments contained in it. There is potentially a reputation risk to Council if these community expectations are not met. The risk is considered low as Council is already delivering on many of the commitments through its existing interaction with small businesses.

Noting that although Council may already be undertaking many of the actions/services and support listed in the Charter, by not signing up, there is a risk that the local business community, Chamber of Commerce and industry groups may inadvertently label Council as unfriendly or unsupportive of small business.

## SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

**Economic:** Signing the Charter will likely enhance the business profile of Council, which recognises the importance and role small businesses play in developing and diversifying our economy, while also increasing our resilience.

**Environmental:** Nil

**Social:** An enhanced business profile will likely lead to new small businesses looking to establish or relocate in the area. Small businesses create local jobs, grow the local economy, and provide essential goods and services but just as importantly, small businesses help create attractive, liveable communities. They also foster civic pride and help attract people and investment into the area.

## CORPORATE/OPERATIONAL PLAN, POLICY REFERENCE

This report has been prepared in accordance with the following:

### Corporate Plan 2019-2024 Initiatives:

#### Theme 2 - Fostering Sustainable Economic Growth

A robust economy is at the heart of a thriving community and enables investment in environmental protection. While our remoteness is a key attribute, it also presents challenges for attracting new business and investment. We must also meet the challenges of fierce competition in the tourism sector. Council will partner with industry to build, diversify and promote the Douglas economy. Council will design and deliver infrastructure, strategies and services that support the local economy and businesses.

**Goal 1** - *We will build appropriate infrastructure and deliver services that connect and support businesses.*

**Goal 2** - *We will work with partners to promote the Shire as the World's leading sustainable tropical destination and encourage business investment.*

### Operational Plan 2020-2021 Initiatives:

Nil for 2020-2021, proposed initiative for 2021-2022 Operational Plan.

## COUNCIL'S ROLE

Council can play a number of different roles in certain circumstances and it is important to be clear about which role is appropriate for a specific purpose or circumstance. The implementation of actions will be a collective effort and Council's involvement will vary from information only through to full responsibility for delivery.

The following areas outline where Council has a clear responsibility to act:

**Advocate** Council makes representation on behalf of the community on important issues, funding opportunities, projects and programs. Council will use its influence to seek the best outcomes for the community.

## CONSULTATION

**Internal:** Mayor and Councillors, Chief Executive Officer, Managers and Officers from various Council Units.

**External:** Queensland Small Business Commissioner and Commissioner staff, Douglas Chamber of Commerce and other regional Queensland Councils.

## ATTACHMENTS

1. Sample Small Business Friendly Councils Charter [5.5.1 - 2 pages]



## CHARTER

### Sample Council

Small businesses are at the heart of the Queensland economy and our regional communities. They create local employment opportunities, provide essential goods and services and play a critical role in the social fabric of our regions.

This Charter outlines the commitment between local councils, its partners and small businesses to support a prosperous and sustainable small business sector in communities across Queensland.

### Our commitment to small business

#### We will communicate and engage with small business

- actively engage and be mindful of small businesses, their issues and priorities when decision-making
- communicate clearly in a timely manner both formally and informally
- engage with state-wide partners on matters affecting small businesses
- publish clear service standards stating what small businesses can expect from us.

#### We will raise the profile and capability of small businesses

- recognise and value the importance small businesses make to our community and local economy
- encourage shopping locally and promote small business campaigns (e.g. 'buy local', 'go local first')
- help small businesses develop networks, access education and increase their capability
- assist small businesses to access government, business and industry programs and resources.

#### We will support small business resilience and recovery

- with support from our state-wide partners deliver short, medium, long term activities to help with recovery and resilience building following disaster events or economic shocks
- adopt a business disruption management good practice guide (e.g. working with small business to minimise disruption during local capital works projects).

#### We will simplify administration and regulation for small business (red tape reduction)

- limit unnecessary administration and implement business improvement processes
- support small businesses to achieve regulatory compliance
- apply licences and regulations in a consistent manner in collaboration with other councils and relevant agencies
- regularly review administration and regulatory requirements, policies and procedures to reduce red tape
- maintain a timely and cost-effective internal review and complaint process in relation to council decisions.

#### We will ensure fair procurement and prompt payment terms for small businesses

- implement a procurement policy that provides a fair opportunity to provide goods and services
- help find local council procurement opportunities to assist in tendering
- pay all valid invoices from small business suppliers within a stated reasonable period (e.g. 20 calendar days).

#### We will develop and promote place-based programs for small businesses

- identify, develop and promote a minimum of two place-based programs which are important for start-ups, growing businesses and building resilience (these may include existing or new programs).

## We will promote and showcase small businesses

- promote participation via marketing and communication channels (e.g. in collaboration with local chamber of commerce)
- create awareness by promoting the SBFC initiative (e.g. SBFC branding online and across marketing and communication materials)
- sharing successes, ideas and learnings with other councils and partners
- allow the Office of the Queensland Small Business Commissioner to promote council programs and activities related to the SBFC initiative.

## We will measure and report on our performance

- seek regular feedback from our small businesses to help drive business improvement
- monitoring the commitments in this Charter to ensure we fulfill these obligations
- publish a report in relation to council's performance in relation to the SBFC initiative within six months of signing the Charter and once every 12 months thereafter.

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## Acceptance

We agree to the terms outlined in this Charter and agree to implement the SBFC Initiative.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name:

*Mayor – XXXXXXX Regional Council*

Dated:

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Name:

*XXXXXXX Chamber of Commerce (optional)*

Dated:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name:

*Queensland Small Business Commissioner*

Dated: