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MR17/007 EASY TO DO BUSINESS

File Ref: E88.0056

Attachments: Nil

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This mayoral report seeks Council support to investigate joining 'Easy to do Business' Program. The program is a partnership with Service NSW with an opportunity for Council to become a member of the Regional Council Reference Group to influence regulatory policy change across government and inform the Easy to do Business program.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

THAT Council investigate the 'Easy to do Business' Program and report back to a future Council meeting.

### **REPORT**

#### Background

'Easy to do Business' Program is a joint initiative between the Department of Premier and Cabinet, the Customer Service Commissioner, the Office of NSW Small Business Commissioner and Service NSW. This initiative has a direct link to NSW State Priority "Make NSW the easiest state to start a business".

The initiative brings agencies, local councils and industry bodies together with the intent of making the process of opening or expanding a small business simpler and faster. The initiative was piloted at the City of Parramatta Council in June 2016 and since then it has also started to expand to the other local government areas. To date, the initiative has reported excellent results including the time taken to open a new business being reduced from 18 months to less than 90 days.

In accordance with Service NSW (One-stop Access to Government Services) Act 2013, a council resolution is required to allow a council to enter into a Service Partnership Agreement and to delegate the relevant customer service functions related to the administration of 'Easy to do Business' Program to the Chief Executive Officer, Service NSW.

Accordingly, this report seeks Council approval to investigate the program with the aim of extending the program benefits to small businesses within the Eurobodalla.

#### Discussion

The initiative aims to streamline the processes of opening a new business, which typically require a business owner to deal with 13 agencies, including Council, and to complete 48 forms. The entire process can take up to 18 months in some local government areas. The initiative has initially focused on the café, small bar and restaurant subsector; however, the initiative will also expand to other subsectors such as clothing retail, print businesses and road freight, etc., in the future.

Service NSW provides a digital platform and upfront information regarding what is required by a potential new business owner from all the approval authorities, including Council. A single

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digital form replaces the 48 existing forms. A business concierge service, via a single phone number, is also provided to support customers through the process.

The key benefits of the partnership with Service NSW as part of 'Easy to do Business' program are reported to include:

- Better quality development applications will be submitted as a business concierge team will review the documents before they are submitted to the council. This will save time for applicants as well as for the council to complete the development applications.
- The business concierge team will provide support for residents with new business ideas. This should promote economic activity within the local government area.
- A single digital form will assist residents to enter information quickly and to avoid the need for repeated entry of the same data.
- This initiative will allow Council to maintain its status as a "Business Friendly Council" with the NSW Small Business Commissioner's Office.
- Council will benefit from exploring further future collaboration opportunities with Service NSW because of this partnership.

Conclusion

The 'Easy to do Business' Program may benefit Council and its residents through a more streamlined process for opening a café, small bar and restaurant. This initiative could also support Council's continued focus on business improvement to make processes and systems easier for local residents, and those wishing to do a business in Eurobodalla.

It is appropriate for Council to review the program, including liaising with councils already involved in the program, to determine its potential benefit to the Eurobodalla.