

# CQ NEWS

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### Free your entrepreneurial spirit

GET out of the way, take down barriers and let young people get on with the job.

That's entrepreneur Steve Baxter's advice for all levels of government looking to capitalise on and grow innovative start-up businesses.

The former Emerald student made some of his millions alongside schoolmate Bevan Slattery, with the pair launching PIPE Networks in 2001.

Since leaving the company, Steve has launched several other businesses and in 2015 joined the team on Shark Tank Australia, where aspiring entrepreneurs pitch their ideas for real investment.

Last week, Steve was part of a team of entrepreneurs travelling through regional and remote Queensland to show students innovation isn't limited by location.

"If you can do bloody well in the regions, you can do well pretty much anywhere – it breeds pretty resilient business people," he said.

Steve cited Apple's App Store as an example of how people could reach up to half a billion customers from just about anywhere.

"You can do this from anywhere in the world," he



**INSPIRING:** Philip, Ciara, entrepreneur Stephen Baxter, 2016 Telstra Business Women's Queensland Entrepreneur Patrice Brown, Grace and Jonathan.

PHOTO: REBEKAH YELLAND

said.

"Will it work? I have no idea and you don't either until you just go and do it."

But before doing anything, Steve said young entrepreneurs needed to do more than simply have an idea.

He said those looking to get into that business space needed the right skills and a problem people would pay to have solved.

Then they can create a solution.

"The idea to solve it might change over time, but the problem is usually always valid," Steve said.

Most people will recognise Steve from Shark Tank, a forum which he believes is a great way for businesses to get their names known even if they don't walk away with an investment.

Each pitch usually lasts more than an hour, but Steve said that was condensed to roughly 10 minutes on screen.

"We dispense a lot of advice," he said.

"I recommend everyone has a crack.

"It's a half a million dollar TV ad if you get on. That's a hell of a start to a business."