



## Submission to the Inquiry into the Operation of the Trading (Allowable Hours) Act 1990

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## Introduction

Commerce North West would like to make a submission to the Inquiry into the Operation of the Trading (Allowable Hours) Act 1990. We represent the views of our members and will present data collected in a recent survey of the wider community to support our submission. The survey data shared below shows an overwhelming support from both consumers and the local business community for allowing the larger retailers in town to open on Sundays. Prior to conducting the survey, we were fairly confident that consumers would be in favour of allowing 7 day trading, however we were not certain of business sentiment on the issue. The survey set out to measure both and we are relying on this data to support this submission.

## Commerce North West

Commerce North West has a proud history of serving the region as an active leader and advocate for the commercial, industrial, civic and general interests of North West Queensland. We are a proactive force involved in employment issues, regional economic development, government relations, tourism growth and events management. We continue to promote spending locally by creating initiatives such as the 'Buy Local Gift Card' campaign and 'Member to Member Offers'. Ultimately aiming to promote and advance North West Queensland; attract new consumers, visitors and investors – ensuring longevity, sustainability and liveability in our region.

## The Survey

Commerce North West, in conjunction with the Mount Isa City Council, conducted a survey via Survey Monkey that was shared widely throughout the community via social media sites and newsletters. The aim of the survey was to ask a range of questions that would lead to statistics that as accurately as possible reflected the sentiments of the entire community on the question of whether or not to allow larger retail outlets to trade on Sundays.

The survey was divided into 3 sections. We were conscious that consumers may have very different views on the subject that business owners who may be affected in entirely different ways by a relaxation of the trading restrictions currently in place for the larger retailers. The survey was designed to allow respondents the opportunity to respond differently as consumers and as businesspeople if they were conflicted. The first section sought to collect some basic demographic data about the respondents. The second was aimed directly at the local business community and asked questions specifically aimed at determining their sentiments on the issue. The final section was aimed at the local consumer.



In summary, the data from the survey is as follows:

Total Responders: 1418

- All but 2 were from postcode 4825(Mount Isa) or surrounding areas
- 75% were full time workers
- 78% were between the ages of 25 – 54
- 75% were female
- 42.73% were a couple with children

Businesses were then surveyed and

- 80.03% business support the relaxation of Sunday Trading restrictions on large retailers in Mount Isa.
- Only 18.4% of businesses feel they would be forced to open on Sundays should the larger retailers also open on Sundays
- Of those who were NOT in favour of Sunday Trading
  - 12.75% could not afford the wages on a Sunday
  - 17.13% indicated they would likely close on Monday or Tuesday to allow staff a day off
  - 21% are already open on Sundays and believe they would experience a significant loss if the larger retailers were also open.
  - 48% indicated “other”. These people had the option of leaving comments and it was clear that many had not read the question. Instead, they often expressed their support of 7 day trading.

When we surveyed residents,

- 80.64% resident support Sunday trade
- 89.63% would find Sunday trading convenient
- 40% currently shop on Saturdays (15% currently shop after 3pm on a Saturday)
- 68.22% would still support small convenience stores
- 95.47% would still attend sport and community events

Lastly, we gave people the opportunity to make comments about the issue and a selection of responses that were echoed by several others are quoted below exactly as they were captured in the survey.

### **Those in favour**

#### *Shift work*

“I’m voting For.....With my and my partners work hours and kids sports commitments the only time either us can do our grocery shopping is at night, or during the busiest time on Saturday afternoon. Sunday would make it easier to do our shopping.”

“As a shift worker working long hours, it’s really inconvenient not having Sunday trading to buy groceries and prepare food. I strongly support opening of supermarkets on Sundays for this reason.”



"Given the heavy shift worker community in Mount Isa (I work at the hospital on shift work and my partner in the mines) it is hugely inconvenient not being able to grocery shop on a Sunday. Last Sunday I had to buy washing powder from foodworks and it cost me \$26!! Often Sunday is the only day we have to shop."

#### *Tourism*

"It's not just residents who benefit but also our many travellers. So many tourists stay on weekends, lost trade because nothing is opened or they don't realise and go without."

"get out of the dark ages and catch up with rest of the world, tourists coming here are astonished that shops are closed Sundays."

"Transient Aussie travelers are caught out when traveling through places like Mount Isa when shops are not open."

#### *Those who live out of town and travel in for supplies.*

"For remote cattle station employees who already work 5-6days a week and having to drive anywhere from 2-6hrs each way to come in to do there shopping, Sunday trading would benefit them."

"Mt Isa services a large area residents like myself from Camooweal shop fortnightly and due to work and kids at school can't go during the week Saturdays are far to busy and shelves almost all empty and your click and collect is mostly all out of stock. Can't afford to buy in the smaller supermarkets all the time."

"I find working on a cattle station on only having weekends off it is hard to travel 3 hours and still have all my shopping done for me and the station by 12pm on a Saturday. It makes it hard to keep cold and frozen essentials if we were to stay in town Saturday night."

#### *Those concerned about price gouging by convenience stores*

"The small grocery shops don't have competitive prices due to knowing that if you go to their shops you need what you are looking for now. I paid 7\$ for a small milo at the small grocery shop as I forgot to buy on Saturday from coles. A 395gr milo from coles is 7\$. Small groceries take advantage of us. I avoid going to them if I can. I wait for the coles or Woolworths to open on Monday usually."

"I am for it. The price of things at smaller shops is out of control."

"I always try and support small business and local families but the prices and the range at the local foodworks have stopped me shopping at them even on a Sunday, I work shift work and if I finish on a Saturday night I am unable to get fresh food for Sunday's meal."





### Those against 7 day trading for larger retailers

“Sunday trade is unnecessary and would negatively affect workers who will be forced to work Sundays due to lack of staff, which will negatively impact on their family time.”

“With 6 days trading for the bigger stores (Woolworths, Coles), open til late, and online shopping, there’s plenty of time and opportunity for people to do their shopping without having to go on a Sunday.”

“Against Sunday trading Be organised Be mindful of small stores.”

## Conclusions

The feedback received from the survey is clear. The vast majority of both local business owners/operators, and residents are in favour of allowing the larger retailers to open on Sundays in Mount Isa.

Allowing 7 day trading would

- Improve liveability for locals.
- Provide more flexibility especially for those working shifts to access the shops.
- Improve access to shops for those who live remotely and who rely on Mount Isa for their supplies.
- Improve visitor sentiment who are often dismayed to discover our major retailers closed on Sundays.
- Create more job opportunities especially for juniors over the weekends.
- Not impact in a negative way, community events and activities.

Commerce North West cannot ignore the small minority of businesses who will be unfavourably impacted if larger retailers open on Sunday. We believe that they will be able to make changes to their business that will allow them to survive. Such changes could include specialising in particular products or by ensuring that they better meet the needs of the population who live nearby. As seen in the comments above, there is concern in the community that these smaller stores take advantage of people who are forced to shop from them regardless of the day of the week. 7 day trading by the larger supermarkets may help address this by forcing smaller outlets to cater to their customers more fairly.

In summary then, for the purposes of this submission, Commerce North West would like the Inquiry into the Operation of the Trading (Allowable Hours) Act 1990 to know that we are in favour of changing the legislation to allow larger retail outlets in Mount Isa to trade on Sundays.