



Speech by

JOHN MICKEL

MEMBER FOR LOGAN

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TRADING (ALLOWABLE HOURS) AMENDMENT BILL

Mr MICKEL (Logan—ALP) (10 p.m.): I commend the Minister for being able to negotiate this important change on behalf of the retail industry. However, as the Bill talks about Christmas trading, there is a group of people whom I want to support who feel that, in some instances, they may not be able to last even until Christmas. I am talking particularly about some of the people in the motor vehicle repair industry.

Members of that industry believe that the major insurers are misusing their market power to unfairly reduce their costs at the expense of motorists and repairers. They believe that existing members of recommended repairer schemes have been misled in relation to the need to update business equipment and facilities. As they are paying award wages, they believe that their employment opportunities in the industry have been diminished. They also feel that, with the increasing use of contract workers in some repair shops, there are no incentives or opportunities to train apprentices.

My friends in the industry believe also that motorists have lost their freedom to choose the repairer they want. Repairers believe that they have lost goodwill in their business with no compensation. They believe that repair standards are dropping from the current position of world's best practice. With reduced profits, there is a real fear that the good operators, those with outstanding names in the industry, are starting to leave because their margins have been reduced. They say that it is now unattractive for new operators to enter the industry because of the closed-shop principles that they believe the insurance companies are leading them to. They believe that those practices can only increase the duration of time spent on repairs and delay the return of vehicles to their owners. There is also a belief in the industry that non-genuine parts are being used to drive down costs. That use of non-genuine parts has a potential to devalue vehicles and cause some serious problems for all of the parties concerned.

Time tonight does not permit me to go into this issue fully. I flag to the Parliament that I fully intend to pursue this issue. Over the break in parliamentary sittings, I will be discussing this issue further with motor vehicle repair shops. I believe that the better ones should be preserved. We should be giving them every encouragement to continue in business. They are a viable small business in country towns and certainly in parts of my electorate. Once I have had those discussions with them, I may refer the whole industry to the Minister for Fair Trading for her to examine.
