



Speech by

Dr LESLEY CLARK

MEMBER FOR BARRON RIVER

Hansard 18 November 1998

TRADING (ALLOWABLE HOURS) AMENDMENT BILL

Dr CLARK (Barron River—ALP) (10.02 p.m.): I will contribute very briefly to this debate to thank the Minister for his responsiveness to this issue. There is no doubt that he has recognised the importance of this issue and been prepared to convene meetings with all stakeholders to have it resolved satisfactorily. As soon as I had received representations from shop owners in the Smithfield Shopping Centre—the only regional shopping centre in my electorate—I discussed those concerns with the Minister. He indicated to me that he would look very seriously at this issue. In fact, I thought the circumstances may have been such that it was too difficult to change at this late stage, that arrangements would be set in concrete and that, even with my best representations, it would be impossible to change them. It was very rewarding for me to see how quickly the Minister responded.

I will share with the House a comment by one of the traders in the shopping centre. She said, "This has restored my faith in politicians." The traders felt that they had actually been listened to and that somebody really understood the significance of this issue to their family life. This year, traders in the Smithfield Shopping Centre have had a very difficult year. Those people who know Cairns will appreciate that there is an oversupply of retail space in Cairns. Business has not been good. The traders have also had the problem of council rates increasing. It has been a very stressful year for those small businesspeople and their families. For them, the last straw was the thought that they would have to spend the whole Christmas period working instead of spending time with their families. For them, this issue has been a victory of the voice of small businesspeople. Government decisions have taken their concerns into account.

To show the depth of feeling of some of those traders, I point out that they were prepared to cop the \$50 an hour fines that they would have to suffer for breaking the conditions of their lease by not opening their shops. That was the strength of feeling of those people in the Smithfield Shopping Centre. I commend the Minister for this response. I hope to provide more support to traders in the Smithfield Shopping Centre. I am hoping to relocate my office into that centre. I know that Lend Lease has been quite tough on those tenants. That company plays a very hard game in terms of the rents that it strikes. If I am on the spot, I can be more effective in terms of making representations to ensure that those small businesses in the Smithfield Shopping Centre get the very best deal that they possibly can. I look forward to working cooperatively with those businesses and the centre management. I acknowledge Steve Trembath and his staff. They do a very good job of working with the traders in the shopping centre to provide the best customer service that they can. I congratulate and thank the Minister.
