



Speech by

Hon. J. ELDER

MEMBER FOR CAPALABA

Hansard 16 September 1999

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT
Queensland Businesses

Hon. J. P. ELDER (Capalaba—ALP) (Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development and Minister for Trade) (9.48 a.m.), by leave: The Beattie Government is committed to creating a positive environment for Queensland businesses. In particular, this Government recognises the role of the retail industry as a vital and increasingly important element of the Queensland economy. This is highlighted by its status as the largest employer in Queensland, employing 21% of all private sector employees and 31% of all young employed Queenslanders between the ages of 15 and 24. In addition, the retail industry is the third largest industry in Queensland, with 32,100 retail businesses in 1996-97, representing 18% of all business establishments.

Recently, the Office of Small Business in the Department of State Development has completed the review of the Retail Shop Leases Act. The Act has long served as a method of meaningful assistance to the retail industry since its inception in 1984. It provides minimum standards for leasing and low-cost, speedy dispute resolution services, particularly targeted at providing assistance and protection to smaller retailers in leasing relationships. The Act was the first legislation of its type introduced in Australia, and it is notable that the legislation was recognised as the best practice retail tenancy legislation nationally by the fair trading inquiry in 1997.

The Beattie Government has recognised through this comprehensive review of the Act that improving the effectiveness and efficiency of the legislation and reducing both the number of disputes and the length of time required to resolve them improves the overall business environment. The amendments proposed in the policy paper which I now table in the House have been developed in response to the issues raised through extensive consultation with the retail industry and other stakeholders, particularly through comments received on a discussion paper released in November 1998. Over 1,800 copies of the discussion paper and 1,200 summary brochures were distributed.

The Department of State Development also established an industry based working group representing both lessee and lessor interests to facilitate consolidated industry feedback on issues considered during the review. This has significantly enhanced the consultation process. The working group included representatives of the Retailers Association of Queensland, the Queensland Retail Traders and Shopkeepers Association, the Property Council of Australia, the Queensland Investment Corporation and two independent representatives. Working group representatives have been able to reach agreement on all of the amendments proposed, which will assist in ensuring that the Act will continue to be relevant and beneficial to the parties to a lease. I congratulate the working group representatives for their professionalism and the spirit with which the entire discussions were entered into within that group.

The tabling of this policy review paper in this House discharges my obligations under section 122 of the legislation. This public release of the policy review paper provides the retail industry and other interested members of the public with a final opportunity to provide comments on the Government's preferred amendments to the Act before they are finalised and introduced into the Parliament. I table the policy review paper on the Retail Shop Leases Act 1994 and commend it to the House.
