



Speech by

BONNY BARRY

MEMBER FOR ASPLEY

Hansard 6 March 2002

TRADING [ALLOWABLE HOURS] AMENDMENT BILL

Ms BARRY (Aspley—ALP) (9.06 p.m.): I rise to support the Trading (Allowable Hours) Amendment Bill 2002. In my speech I hope to answer some of the criticisms of the member for Caloundra. The electorate of Aspley is home to extensive small and medium businesses, located on suburban streets and corners and contained within large complexes such as the very first Brisbane hyper shopping centre, the Aspley Hypermarket.

The electoral boundaries of Aspley are adjacent to two large shopping centres, the Chermside shopping centre and Westfield Strathpine shopping centre. In fact, many hundreds of Aspley electorate constituents work and shop in these centres. Our large shopping centres, like those in the electorate of Mansfield, in particular Westfield Strathpine, contain many dozens of small businesses, as well as Myer and Woolworths.

The electorate of Aspley has the unusual honour of covering two shires—Brisbane city and the Pine Rivers shire. Following the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission decision to restrict the RAQ application for extended trading hours, the Brisbane City Council area of my electorate could trade on Sundays. The Pine Rivers section at the end of my electorate was effectively locked out of competing and accessing the new shopping environment afforded to those at the lower end.

The result of the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission decision was that shoppers from the Strathpine section of my electorate would simply get into their cars, drive five minutes down the road to Aspley and Chermside and purchase their goods and services there. When one considers what impact this would have on the business owners and the community of Strathpine, one comes to a relatively simple conclusion. They would in very real terms lose business and jobs to those shops operating on an extended hours regime as allowed within the Brisbane City Council area.

As a busy mother of four children I know the reality of life in a greater urban suburb. I actually live in the Strathpine section of the Aspley electorate. Our lives, like those of a lot of people, are incredibly busy. They are seven days a week. We are busy with our own and our children's activities during the day, during the evening and on the weekends. We snatch time to do our weekly grocery shopping. We grab windows of opportunity to get our dry cleaning, birthday presents or the forgotten dog food and, yes, occasionally to have a cup of coffee with our mates down at the local centre. We can spend from early morning to late evening running from one end of our lives to the other.

People who live in a greater urban area can spend two to three hours each day going to and from work. Many people from the Pine Rivers shire work in the Brisbane city centre, so they can spend two to three hours each day in the car. The fact is that extended trading hours simply suit our lifestyle. People will certainly want supported extended trading hours.

A considerable number of the people who live in Strathpine in the electorate of Aspley will drive that five minutes up the road to Aspley and Chermside to shop. The result for the people who work and own small and medium businesses in Strathpine is job losses and revenue losses. That outcome, in combination with the exclusionary treatment of the people of Pine Rivers shire in denying them the opportunity to access their local shops, is what is unacceptable to the Beattie Labor government. This legislation takes steps to prevent the collateral damage to the workers and owners in the retail industry as a consequence of the Pine Rivers shire's exclusion from extended shopping hours.

I want to briefly raise two issues. The first one is the issue of employee and business rights in relation to the prevention of compulsory opening of businesses and the compelling of employees to

work extended hours. These are issues that are of vital concern to the state government. The Minister for Industrial Relations in his second reading speech clearly identified that retailers will be protected from being forced to trade on Sundays and public holidays under their retail shop leases by ensuring that Sundays and public holidays are not allowable for the purposes of establishing core trading hours under the Retail Shop Leases Act 1994.

Employees have always had rights under their relevant industrial laws to be protected against coercion in many respects. However, in response to concerns by employees and their unions, this minister intends to move further amendments to ensure that there is a strengthening of provisions so that existing employees cannot be coerced into working Sundays or public holidays. It is important to note that these matters of voluntary work for employees are the subject of a consent application lodged by the SDA in the QIRC. It is my understanding from reading the award application that clause (x) of the application indicates that the SDA is of the understanding that the Retailers Association of Queensland will support the application.

This government has listened and will continue to listen to the concerns of employees, their unions, shop retailers and their respective associations. But this state government will show leadership in ensuring the best possible and equitable outcomes for all Queenslanders, whether they live within the boundaries of the Brisbane City Council, Pine Rivers shire or elsewhere. The businesses in the Aspley electorate are hard working, vibrant members of our community. Aspley electorate residents support both small local corner and street businesses as well as large shopping centres. Competition is fierce. One has only to drive slowly through Aspley to understand how fierce the competition is. People shop where there is service, price and quality, and they all add up.

I recently had the honour of travelling to New Zealand with the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee with the member for Tablelands and the member for Mulgrave. As members would know, New Zealand is predominantly a rural community. Everyone was bragging about their industries, whether it be sheep, wheat or sugarcane. They came to me and said, 'Ms Barry, what's your industry in Aspley?' I was at a bit of a loss but replied, 'The industry in Aspley is shopping.' People thought I was saying that tongue in cheek, and I have to admit that I probably was at the time. But the reality is that if one drives through the electorate of Aspley that is what we are: we are shopping. Our communities are created in our shopping centres.

For those members who have children, particularly teenagers, we teach our children to grow up and to become independent by sending them to the cinema at the local shopping centre as a way of learning independence. That might sound crazy to some people, but they are actually quite safe environments. We go there to shop and as a result we talk to and bond with the people in our local shopping centres. Our problem is this: if our shops are not allowed to open, we cannot do that. That might be unusual and a bit of an eye-opener for many National Party members, but things have changed in local urban shopping centres and our way of life has changed. This legislation ensures that our Pine Rivers businesses have the opportunity to open if they wish.

I want to respond to the National Party's contribution to the debate about trading hours both in this House and in the community of Pine Rivers. First of all, in the characteristic and back to the past style of the National Party, it describes what it thinks of as the small business industry as those shops found on the corners of our towns and those locked out of shopping malls by evil-doing multinationals. The truth is that our shopping malls are primarily made up of dozens of small businesses. It is those businesses that will lose revenue to the mall down the road which is allowed to open on Sundays if we do not change this law. Is the National Party aware of the collateral damage done by excluding zones such as Pine Rivers shire? If so, why does it ignore the plight of small businesses in what would have been excluded shopping centres?

The other thing I want to comment on is the National Party presumption that small business has successful shopping days only on Sundays and that somehow they cannot compete at all with bigger retailers. The truth is that small businesses are indeed often vibrant and fiercely competitive. They are able to maintain customer loyalty through quality product, good service and genuine savings. It is an insult to suggest that small businesses will simply be unable to cope. Like many people in Strathpine, there are local stores I shop at from Monday through to Sunday regardless of whether or not the mall is open because they provide me with a product and a service that I want. It will continue to happen, because many small businesses have incredible resourcefulness and many shoppers have strong loyalty to them.

What we do not need is scaremongering and confusion caused by the National Party and confusion caused by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, who initially could not work out whether his party was for or against Sunday trading. Thank goodness, the Leader of the Opposition was able to be contacted on holidays to clarify the situation. But wait, there's more! The Deputy Leader of the Opposition has gone into the Pine Rivers shire doomsaying the end of a proposed community bank because of seven day trading—

Mr Johnson interjected.

Ms BARRY: I am going to Charleville, Vaughan.

On 3 March he was then forced to change his mind and say that the bank would survive in spite of it. His comments either smack of a lack of conviction to his own party policy or are the sign of a confused and fragmented National Party policy—but they display a distinct lack of faith in small business in the Pine Rivers shire. I have no such lack of faith and my message to local businesses is clear and consistent: I will continue to work hard with local businesses through the work I undertake with the Office of Small Business in State Development which works very hard to ensure that our businesses have access to the resources that they need to grow, to survive and to prosper, and they do that very well.

I regularly meet with businesses in my area. I hold a very successful local women's business breakfast attended by over 100 women. They are fantastic. I work closely with the chambers of commerce. In fact, as proof of commitment to the Strathpine centre, this state government has committed \$1.1 million to assist Pine Rivers shire in the redevelopment of the Strathpine streetscape, a community redevelopment project that is designed to inject new shopping friendly facilities that will encourage local residents to shop along Gympie Road. The multimillion-dollar streetscape project in Strathpine is currently building new footpaths, will remove overhead powerlines and provide planting and seating designed to welcome people to walk, shop and enjoy the local street businesses in Strathpine. We are a government that is serious about supporting businesses, particularly small businesses, in Strathpine and we are putting our money where our mouth is.

I will continue to listen to the workers of my electorate. I encourage them to contact me. I have worked shiftwork all my life as a nurse. I understand the concerns of workers in relation to quality of life with their families. This government has listened to their concerns. I will commit to work closely with them to solve any problems that arise out of this new regime. This government is serious about family-friendly workplaces and about workers' rights. It was this state government that reformed the anti-worker state industrial legislation introduced by the National-Liberal coalition, restoring employer and employee equity and access. It was this Minister for Industrial Relations who established a Work and Family Unit in the Department of Industrial Relations. The unit will run projects about family flexible initiatives in the workplace, and there is a \$99,000 commitment to develop industry codes on reasonable working hours. Money is allocated for a workplace bullying inquiry and youth advocacy services. This government is on the record with its achievement and commitment to workers. I will continue to work with my constituents and the Minister for Industrial Relations to develop solutions to their workplace concerns.

This legislation is before the House because times have changed. This legislation is before the House because this is a state government for all people of Queensland. This legislation is before the House because this government is committed to all businesses in this state. This legislation is before the House because this state government will show leadership and will not shirk away from that responsibility. I thank the Minister for Industrial Relations for his time and for his preparedness to listen to my representations on behalf of my constituents, my businesses and my workers and for the people of the Aspley electorate. On behalf of all of the people of the Aspley electorate, I commend him and the Premier for their leadership. I commend the bill to the House.
