



Speech by

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MEMBER FOR KAWANA

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TRADING [ALLOWABLE HOURS] AMENDMENT BILL

Mr CUMMINS (Kawana—ALP) (9.20 p.m.): I rise today to speak on the Trading (Allowable Hours) Amendment Bill, and I take this opportunity to advise the minister, the Premier and the House of possible concerns that both I and Sunshine Coast constituents may share with regards to some of the changes that we specifically on the Sunshine Coast will face following this bill's implementation.

It never ceases to amaze me when I hear the conservative hypocritical rhetoric that small businesses cannot and will not survive upon implementation of this legislation. In former conservative heartland—and I stress former—the Sunshine and Gold Coasts, we have had extended trading hours. Small and medium businesses alike have embraced the concept for a number of years, and the ill-founded conservative rhetoric that continues to be espoused is an insult to all such businesses that have achieved successes and to their owners, managers and employees. One would indeed think that the conservative side of this House would embrace a level playing field—what this bill attempts to achieve: uniformity.

This bill before the House amends the Trading (Allowable Hours) Act of 1990 to address the impact on retail traders, shopping centres and consumers in south-east Queensland of a recent decision by the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission to introduce Sunday trading into the city of Brisbane area only. As has been well publicised and outlined, the bill provides single trading hour zones to include uniform trading on Sundays and public holidays in the south-east coastal area of Queensland. I for one can see the benefits of a level playing field, that is, uniform trading hours on Sundays and public holidays across the south-east coastal area of this great state.

The Industrial Relations Commission has previously granted extended trading, including on Sundays and public holidays, in a number of tourist areas and city precincts throughout Queensland, including the inner city of Brisbane; the Gold and Sunshine Coast areas; the Cairns, Port Douglas and Whitsunday areas; and the Townsville CBD. A further important issue raised in the consultation with various industry parties is the current unsatisfactory situation in which numerous trading hour zones exist between the existing Sunshine Coast and Gold Coast areas, resulting in both industry and consumer confusion.

Separate trading hour zones that fall within this area include the Sunshine Coast area, near north coast area, inner city of Brisbane area, area of the city heart, area of New Farm of inner city of Brisbane, and the Gold Coast area. These areas all have individual trading hours with different trading applying in the areas in between. An anomaly exists in that the growth areas to the south of the Sunshine Coast area and the north of the Gold Coast area currently do not have Sunday trading. These areas have a combined population of approximately 140,000, growing at some four and a half thousand persons annually. This anomaly of shopping hours does need addressing, hence the bill before us tonight.

The Beattie government is committed to addressing concerns by way of improving the commission's decision in the interests of the retail industry, the consumers and, in my region, the workers by ensuring that they have Easter Sunday off. It is proposed to introduce a single trading hour zone known as the South-East Queensland Area, extending from Noosa on the Sunshine Coast to Coolangatta on the Gold Coast and west to Amberley. The current Sunshine Coast area will be extended south along the Bruce Highway to include Bribie Island and the Sippy Downs/Chancellor Park areas on the north-west boundary of my electorate of Kawana.

Uniform trading hours are to be adopted based on the current hours applying on Sundays in the Sunshine Coast, inner city of Brisbane and Gold Coast areas. These uniform hours of 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. will apply on Sundays and public holidays for all non-exempt shops within the South-East Queensland Area. All shops will be required to close on Good Friday, Easter Sunday, Anzac Day, Labour Day and Christmas Day. Currently in the Sunshine Coast and Gold Coast areas shops are required to close on Good Friday, Anzac Day I believe until 1 p.m., Labour Day and Christmas Day. Accordingly, the only additional closed day will be Easter Sunday.

The big positive of this bill is that changes as proposed will introduce, as I have said, uniformity of hours on Sundays and public holidays within the one trading hour zone. These changes will operate from 1 August 2002 to ensure that industry parties have a lead-in period in which to make any necessary administrative or commercial arrangements. Easter this year will remain under the current system, that is, open Easter Sunday on the Sunshine Coast and those other areas that presently allow for that.

The proposed amendments, I believe, will protect shopping centre tenants from being forced to trade on Sundays and public holidays and are supported by key industry parties. Should this protection not be applied uniformly within the whole area, inconsistencies could exist in respect of those areas that currently trade on Sundays and public holidays, such as the Sunshine Coast, Gold Coast and the inner city of Brisbane. Core hours could be established within these areas, thereby forcing tenants to take trade, whereas in other areas such core hours could not be established.

I am advised that consultation on this bill has been undertaken with the following key industry stakeholders: RAQ—the Retailers Association of Queensland; the Property Council of Queensland—PCA—incorporating the Shopping Centre Council of Australia; the SDA—the Shop Distribution and Allied Employees Association, Queensland branch; QRTSA—Queensland Retail Traders and Shopkeepers Association; NMAA—National Meat Association of Australia, Queensland division; and the Australian Workers Union—the AWU. Questions have been raised by the National Party with regards to the consultation that has been undertaken. I have been advised that consultation included the Premier, the Deputy Premier and the Industrial Relations Minister meeting with the Retailers Association of Queensland—the RAQ, the Queensland Retail Traders and Shopkeepers Association, the Property Council of Australia and the Shop Distribution and Allied Employees Association on 23 January 2001. The Premier and Deputy Premier met with the AWU and the SDA on 15 February. The Industrial Relations Minister has met with the SDA on 20 February and 5 March. The Premier, the Deputy Premier and Industrial Relations Minister also held further joint meetings with the SDA on 5 March at 6.45 p.m. In total, five meetings have been held between the government and the union on this issue. Make no mistake, consultation with all stakeholders has been undertaken. While, yes, there are issues, I believe we must make a decision and not continue to procrastinate.

People have raised with me the issue of working Easter Saturday but having both Good Friday and Easter Sunday off. I have raised this very issue with both the Honourable Minister for Industrial Relations and the Honourable Premier. I appreciate their commitment to address this issue with my constituents in the future. I acknowledge that both are regular recreational visitors to the Sunshine Coast, so I am happy they will be visiting the area as part of their jobs. This will not be hard as they both have a love of the Sunshine Coast, as do I and many members on our side of the House.

In closing, I must admit that I am old enough to remember the introduction of Thursday night shopping. I ask: how many of the hollow conservative speeches we have heard today contained the same arguments raised in the seventies? Not only do they continue with the same hairstyles from the past, but they also continue with the same policies, as mentioned on ABC radio this morning. As far as the state coalition goes, this issue of shopping hours again outlines how far apart these two floundering parties and their ideologies are. In closing, I commend the minister and the Premier, and I commend the bill to the House.