



Speech by

Mrs D. PRATT

MEMBER FOR NANANGO

Hansard 11 March 2003

SUNDAY TRADING

Mrs PRATT (Nanango—Ind) (11.50 a.m.): I rise to speak to the House about the government's Sunday trading policy, which was implemented on 4 August 2002. Firstly, I recognise fully and understand that Sunday trading in central business districts in all major cities here and internationally is an expected and desirable service. The Industrial Relations Commission recommended that there be Sunday trading, but only in the Brisbane CBD. It had the foresight to see the long-term effect that any expansion of Sunday trading outside the CBD would have on small businesses. The Premier overrode that decision and Sunday trade was pushed into the suburbs. Now, only seven months later, small and medium-sized businesses are calling meetings to try to stop the disastrous effects of Sunday trading.

Mr and Mrs Graham wrote to the Premier—and I will read from a copy of that letter—which states in part—

We were just starting to get on our feet when you introduced seven day trading in the suburbs. You are not a man of your word, you said you would abide by the decision of the courts. You overruled that decision. Since the 1st of August our trade has dropped dramatically ... by at least 30% to 45%. We cannot survive very much longer, this will cost us our business and everything else we owned ... Surely Mr Beattie, you would have realised what was going to happen. You will virtually put 13 people on the dole and this is only from our own business.

...

Take a trip around the Redland shire on a Sunday and speak to the small shop owners personally and get the real feeling out there.

That is just one letter, but there has been a lot of concern expressed that reflects that view. The government's current policy of extending Sunday shopping hours to outside the CBD is destroying small businesses and creating a negative effect on jobs growth and job potential.

Last week, along with the Opposition Leader, Mr Springborg, and the member for Toowoomba South, Mr Horan, I attended a meeting organised by businesspeople at Strathpine where there was an overwhelming—in fact a unanimous—feeling against Sunday trading. There was total opposition to extending it to any other area and a desire to actually roll it back to the CBD. The government is possibly not aware of the meeting, because its own local member did not attend. However, approximately 60 businesspeople attended, all of whom, without exception, stated that they were suffering badly. One person was an owner of five IGA stores. He told us that Sunday trading had made his business not viable and he did not renew a lease for one of his stores that is located within the Sunday trading area. He has kept the other four stores, which are located outside the Sunday trading area. This successful businessman was in favour of Sunday trading, but he told the meeting that it was not cost effective for small businesses and that today he is no longer in favour of that type of trading.

Other business owners reported a downturn in profits of between 30 per cent and 60 per cent while yet another businessman stated that his staff levels had dropped from 17 to nine within that seven months. At the meeting, not one business operator did not report a decrease in staff numbers, and shop owners were angry that for their businesses to stay open and remain viable they themselves had been forced to take over staff responsibilities to escape penalty payments.

One report was that in Morayfield alone up to 40 businesses had been forced to close on Sundays. On Sunday, at Toombul, 45 shops were shut; at the Hypermarket, 27 shops were shut and 34 checkouts were shut; At Burpengary, 26 shops were shut; along Morayfield Road, 99 per cent of shops failed to open and 19 shops in the shopping centre failed to open and 68 shops did not want to open on Sundays. Those results were gathered from a personal survey. Also on Sunday, the

Caboolture Coles had one checkout girl rostered on; Kmart had two checkouts open and 34 shops were shut by 11. In the past three months, the Westfield Strathpine Shopping Centre has been offering \$100,000 to shoppers plus Sunday specials. That shopping centre has also spent millions of dollars on advertising. The result has been that 30 shops still remain shut on Sundays and two eateries have closed.

As the government well knows, small businesses are the biggest employers of Australians. The government needs to listen to them. Even the Queensland Retail Shopkeepers Association can confirm the serious effects of ongoing closures and hardships being experienced by the Sunday trading policy. It appears that the government has overridden the Industrial Relations Commission's considered recommendation to allow Sunday trading in only the CBD. Small business and job seekers are paying very, very dearly for this decision. It is time for the government to stop and revisit the whole situation. It should get out and undertake proper research to find out just how badly these people have been affected.

Time expired.