




Speech By
Hon. Leeanne Enoch

MEMBER FOR ALGESTER

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RETAIL SHOP LEASES AMENDMENT BILL

 **Hon. LM ENOCH** (Algester—ALP) (Minister for Innovation, Science and the Digital Economy and Minister for Small Business) (4.43 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Retail Shop Leases Amendment Bill 2015. Small businesses are the engine room of the Queensland economy, and this bill makes it easier for small businesses to grow, thrive and continue to contribute to the Queensland economy.

In Queensland, small businesses represent 97 per cent of all businesses and employ almost half of the state's private sector workforce. This equates to 406,000 businesses in this state that have the potential to employ more Queenslanders. In my own electorate of Algester there is a total of 3,166 small businesses, making up 98.6 per cent of the total number of businesses in my electorate. It is important that small businesses, like those in Algester and across Queensland, have the framework in place to grow and succeed, diversifying our economy and creating jobs.

In addition to introducing this bill to help create a level playing field for small business in Queensland, the Palaszczuk government is committed to providing the required support and advice to help businesses in this state grow. Our government has already delivered on its election promise to establish the Red Tape Reduction Advisory Council to help make doing business in Queensland more efficient. The Red Tape Reduction Advisory Council, which aims to identify systemic issues that require reform and allow small business owners to concentrate on growth, will present its recommendations later in the year.

Through initiatives like our \$1 million Entrepreneurs of Tomorrow Home-Based Business Program and the Mentoring for Growth program, the Palaszczuk government is providing support to small businesses of all sizes to help them succeed. The Home-based Business Grants Program, which opened on 24 August last year, has proved extremely popular, with almost 1,300 applications received for the first round of funding and 202 successful applications funded.

The Mentoring for Growth program is another program that is making a tangible difference to small businesses in Queensland. In 2015, 160 panels were conducted and 596 growing businesses across the state were provided with advice and assistance. To create the right environment for small businesses, start-ups and entrepreneurs to flourish, the Palaszczuk government is delivering the \$180 million Advance Queensland innovation and jobs plan. We want to encourage our small businesses to think big and transform their businesses through innovative ideas.

These few initiatives illustrate the Palaszczuk government's commitment to and recognition of the important contribution small businesses make to the Queensland economy. In fact, next week during Small Business Week over 100 activities will occur right across the state.

The bill before the House today provides another platform to help small retail businesses thrive in our growing and changing economy. The Retail Shop Leases Amendment Bill 2015 ensures small retail businesses are not disadvantaged due to their size when they are negotiating shop lease terms

with major shopping centre landlords. The Retail Shop Leases Act 1994 provides an important framework for addressing the imbalance in negotiating power between major shopping centre landlords and Queensland's retail trade businesses.

The Retail Shop Leases Amendment Bill 2015 outlines a number of improvements to the act to strengthen the protection for retail tenants and reduce red tape. An example of this is the improved flexibility and simplification of waivers for both lessors and lessees. Making paperwork easier to navigate means that small business owners have more time to devote to developing and growing their business.

This bill will enhance tenant protections and provide greater transparency for retail tenants of the costs and provisions involved in taking out or renewing a lease in a shopping centre. This bill will also clarify and improve the operational efficiency and effectiveness of the act, reducing red tape for both retail tenants and landlords.

Government's broader work will establish an environment that drives business growth and productivity, reduces red tape and provides businesses with the opportunity to get ahead, no matter how big or small they are. The Palaszczuk government is committed to ensuring that small businesses in our state grow. As I said, they are the engine room of our economy. We are creating the right environment for people to not just start a business in Queensland but also see their businesses grow and thrive, creating more employment in regional communities and beyond. I commend the bill to the House.