




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR BROADWATER

Record of Proceedings, 10 May 2016

RETAIL SHOP LEASES AMENDMENT BILL

 **Miss BARTON** (Broadwater—LNP) (4.30 pm): It gives me pleasure to rise this afternoon to speak in support of the Retail Shop Leases Amendment Bill. The reason that I am happy to do so is that this is effectively, as I am sure has been well demonstrated by my good friend and colleague the shadow Attorney-General, a repeat and a do-over of a bill that was introduced by the member for Kawana and the former attorney-general. Unfortunately, because of the timing of the election it was one of those bills that lapsed and fell off the table, and it is heartening to see that we will see some bipartisanship across the chamber today.

One of the reasons that I am very happy to support this bill is that we will see a fair way to manage the relationship between lessees and lessors, particularly during negotiations, because often what we have seen is an imbalance. One of the things that this bill will seek to do is address the imbalance that we consistently see, particularly in larger shopping centres, between lessors and lessees where the lessee is a small business. One of the things that this particular bill touches on is ensuring that there are enhanced protections for small business.

One of the things that particularly will help small business is the fact that we now have a low-cost dispute resolution process. When you have a small business wanting to go up against someone like a Vicinity shopping centre, or Novion, or AMP—or whomever these large entities are that are operating shopping centres—it can often be very difficult. If they are trying to come to a fair outcome and trying to negotiate what really is an appropriate contract or appropriate lease, it can be very difficult for the small business to be able to do that when they are trying to negotiate against one of the larger entities. We see that particularly in shopping centres across Queensland. The majority of the tenants are small businesses, and one of the reasons that I am so very proud to support this legislation today is the assistance that it does provide small business because, as we all know, small business is the economic powerhouse of this state. They are absolutely the backbone of the Queensland economy. They are the creators of wealth and they are the growers of jobs, and we need to do anything that we can to make it easier for small business to operate.

We consistently see in shopping centres across the state, particularly in my electorate, that outside of a couple of larger anchor tenants the reality is that a lot of them are small business operators. We see that, as I say, particularly in my electorate at the Runaway Bay Shopping Village, or the Biggera Waters Metro Market, or the Labrador shopping centre and even, to an extent, at Harbour Town. A lot of the traders there are small businesses and they have often found it particularly difficult. I have had a number of small businesses get in touch with me and say that they are very happy to see this legislation back on the table. They got in contact with me when we were in government and we put out a discussion paper about this. We introduced the legislation under the former attorney, the member for Kawana.

This bill is about ensuring that we have a fair way to manage what are in some cases going to be very complex lease negotiations and, ultimately, as I say, address the imbalance between the lessor and the lessee. I am very happy to see that the government has taken on board the work that we did when we were in government and has brought this bill back to the House. I look forward to supporting this bill as it continues through the other stages in the House today.