




Speech By
Ann Leahy

MEMBER FOR WARREGO

Record of Proceedings, 22 August 2017

TRADING (ALLOWABLE HOURS) AMENDMENT BILL

 **Ms LEAHY** (Warrego—LNP) (4.38 pm): I rise to speak on the Trading (Allowable Hours) Amendment Bill 2017. I was looking back to when members last spoke on this bill, which was in May. Now we are in August, about three months down the track. I note that 32 amendments have been tabled to the legislation. It is disappointing that those amendments were not included in the original bill.

The primary aim of the bill is to extend the non-exempt shop trading hours and to standardise the trading hours for Sundays and public holidays across Queensland. I look forward to hearing the minister outline how the 32 latest amendments will alleviate the many concerns raised by small businesses in regional areas. I am disappointed at the manner in which the government has made an eleventh hour presentation of the amendments. Small business owners are busy running their businesses on a day-to-day basis. They do not have time to keep track of the toing and froing of government and the implications that these changes may have for their businesses. Nor do they have time to seek out the secret deals that the government has made with the crossbenchers, which were reported today in the *Courier-Mail*.

In regional Queensland communities, there are many independent retail businesses that many members in this parliament may never have the opportunity to visit to meet the staff or to step inside and make a purchase. I will be interested to hear the government's response to Jos de Bruin, the CEO of MGA Independent Retailers who said about the legislation—

But the Palaszczuk Government has once again ignored the needs of small businesses. This is just another step in the radical trading hours' changes promised by a Government determined to promote the interests of big businesses in Queensland, over the desperate needs of smaller businesses who are struggling to survive in the retail industry. The Government has ... ignore the cries of small businesses who serve the community, provide jobs and who have for years contributed to the economic well-being of Queensland.

There are many small businesses in my electorate, such as the IGAs in Miles, Roma, Charleville, St George and Chinchilla, the SPAR supermarket in Injune and the FoodWorks stores at Mitchell, Dirranbandi, Roma, Miles, Tara, Thargomindah, Quilpie, Dalby or St George, just to mention a few family run small businesses that my constituents access on a daily basis. Those are the businesses that provide a lot of jobs in the communities. It is interesting to note that the FoodWorks in St George has been owned by the Webster family for more than 50 years. It is a very hardworking family run small business.

Recently I had the pleasure of dropping into the Handistore at St George. It was a very big weekend in St George for locals and visitors with the St George races. I was disappointed that the minister was not seen at that great country race meeting. There was also the Intrust Super Cup Rugby League game between the Burleigh Bears and the Sunshine Coast Falcons. You can imagine how busy the Handistore staff were with the influx of visitors. I hope the visitors to St George provided a welcome boost to small businesses over the weekend.

Warrego is also home to many IGA stores, such as the Mills' IGA store in Cunnamulla. The member for Burleigh and I met with Eddie Mills in Cunnamulla. That IGA is a great shop. The staff and owners make everyone feel welcome from their first step inside the store. They have been operating in Cunnamulla for more than 65 years. That is a great effort from a family run small business that has survived droughts, floods and population changes.

The IGA State Board noted that, following the deregulation of trading hours in December 2016, IGA supermarkets lost \$1 million per week in turnover. That loss in turnover meant reduced wages, which ultimately led to a reduction in employment across the network of nearly 130 jobs. Some of those jobs would have been in my electorate. Communities with IGA stores such as those in Miles, Roma, Charleville, St George, Chinchilla and others need every job, especially retail grocery jobs that many women undertake in my electorate. Often women are the backbone of small family operated supermarkets. Take a look at who is stacking the shelves and who is working on the check-out on the weekends and during the week. Nearly always, there is a large number of women doing those jobs. There are men there as well and often I find many young people, some of whom are still at school, working in those jobs so that they can get ahead.

Spar operates 72 stores in Queensland. It reported that, at the same time, they had a 25 per cent decrease in non-tobacco sales on Saturdays alone. The MGA Independent Retailers put the case on behalf of 760 Queensland independent supermarket owners and operators, which employ more than 21,000 staff. Research undertaken by Factuality research at the end of last year showed that 85 per cent of those polled were satisfied with the opening hours as they are. I ask the state government: why the changes? It does not seem to be driven by consumer sentiment. Instead of leading the way with job creation and job security for the state and regional communities, we have a state Labor government that is creating uncertainty for small businesses, particularly family owned small businesses. In Outback Queensland, the youth unemployment rate is over 50 per cent. Those young people do not need more uncertainty. They need a plan for the creation of jobs and for the support of small family run businesses that delivers. They need a better Queensland; not this type of legislation.