




Speech By  
**Bruce Saunders**

**MEMBER FOR MARYBOROUGH**

---

Record of Proceedings, 22 August 2017

### **TRADING (ALLOWABLE HOURS) AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr SAUNDERS** (Maryborough—ALP) (10.48 pm): I rise tonight to speak about the Trading (Allowable Hours) Amendment Bill. I will just give a brief history before I get into the bill. I do not want to sound like the member for Whitsunday, but I come from a family that has had over 100 years in small business and businesses—my father, my brothers, myself and the whole family. I learnt some things very quickly when I went from my media career to a career in small business. My business grew rapidly because we did a couple of things. The first was, as my father always told me, we had to keep our doors open to trade. The second thing was that small business is going through a lot of changes and there is going to be change for years to come as the economy changes, the digital interruption comes in and bigger players come in.

One of the big things I always had problems with when I was in small business is that when small business people start cutting the wages of working-class people and start driving them into the ground they start looking to shop elsewhere. Instead of slipping down to their local store to pick up milk and whatever, if people start cutting, chopping and hurting the average punter on the street that is when they drive them to the bigger supermarkets. They will drive that little bit extra to pick up the milk, the bread et cetera because they are watching their dollars and their budget. A moment ago a couple of members talked about when their livelihood and their house were on the line. They have not got that on their Pat Malone. I have had overdrafts that a kangaroo could not jump over. Some months we were travelling a bit mouldy, as we say in the business, but we worked hard to keep our nose to the grindstone and keep working at the business.

One thing I did like when I was in small business was extendible trading hours and there is a reason why. I had various retail outlets around the state. One of the reasons I liked them was that when the shops were open the customers were out; they were moving around and they were looking at things. We had more chance of getting customers through our door when they were moving around instead of when they were sitting at home and saying, 'This is not happening,' or, 'That is closed,' or whatever. The more people there were moving around, the more chance to capture those people coming into our shop. That is one thing that I thoroughly enjoyed about extended trading hours because that gave me more of a chance to capture more customers, sell my wares, let people know that I was operating a business and that my trading hours were from 4.30 to 10 o'clock every night. That is how we operated our businesses. That is one thing that happened. People moved around. Instead of sitting at home in their lounge rooms or at their barbecues, they were out going to the shops and so we got a chance to capture them.

When we talk about small business a couple of the members opposite start talking about penalty rates and overtime. I employed a lot of staff; my whole family did. I am very proud to say that we always paid penalty rates and we always will. Trickle-down economics does not work.

**Mr Harper:** They attack the unions.

**Mr SAUNDERS:** I will take that interjection from the member. What happens is—and I have said it before and I will keep saying it—the more we cut people, the more they will look for the bargains, the more they will go to the bigger players because the perception is that the bigger players are cheaper. When people are doing it a bit tough and they are trying to save their money, that is where they will go. They think, ‘Oh well. I will save 10 cents here, 15 cents there, 20 cents there and \$1 there.’ It all adds up when people are on a tight budget. Then people say, ‘Let’s cut the penalty rates.’ All the staff I have employed—a lot of staff and I never cut penalty rates—always budgeted. Our penalty rates were built into our business expenses. The other day I said to a business owner who approached me about penalty rates, ‘When I come into your shop will I get cheaper prices if you cut penalty rates?’ ‘Oh no,’ he said. ‘Hang on. You’re telling me you can’t afford to open. If you’re cutting penalty rates, you’re cutting wages. Will your prices come down?’ He said, ‘No, I can’t do that.’ I said, ‘What is the problem with penalty rates?’ He said, ‘I don’t know if I would employ people.’ I said to him, ‘Would you employ more people?’ He said, ‘No, I don’t think so. I would just get the staff to do more than what they are doing now.’ That is the crux of the matter. I keep saying trickle-down economics does not work in small business.

**Mr Harper:** It sounds like you valued your workforce.

**Mr SAUNDERS:** I will take that interjection. I valued my workforce and I made sure that all my staff were paid the correct hourly rate and the penalty rates because I believe that goes around the economy.

When we look at small business I know it is hard. I hear those opposite talking about small business. I was at the coalface for over 20-odd years. I raised a family, paid off mortgages, bought businesses all through small business. I can honestly say that there is no better reward than owning a small business. However, people will only get out of a small business what they put in. They have to work hard and they have to work smart. They have to have great staff and they have to value their staff because the staff in a small business are the front line; they are the troops. When the small business owner is not there, they are the people who serve the customers and look after the customers that keep coming back. A lot of customers in small business come back for service. If people offer the right service and they talk to customers, they will come back; they build up loyalty. That is what happens in small business. They keep building and building. Small business owners keep their nose to the grindstone day in day out, seven days a week.

I heard the member for Whitsunday talking about his family and having a small business. As a child I can remember my father going to work at four o’clock every morning and getting home at 10 o’clock—every day, seven days of the week. When I left the media and I went into my own small business I did the same thing. Some mornings I would get up at three o’clock and I would still be going at 11 o’clock or 12 o’clock at night. If there were container loads of stock in, I would go until two o’clock in the morning, have a shower, go back and open up the business to commence work again the next day. That was my choice. I made that choice. I would just keep pushing ahead.

This is a great bill because it cuts the red tape. I want to congratulate the minister on the bill. Those opposite always talk about cutting red tape and helping small business. In my experience they are a hindrance in small business. When the Newman government was in power—and I have a lot of friends still in small business—they saw their turnover plummet by 25 per cent. If members opposite know anything they will know that turnover is a crucial part of a business. When the LNP was in power my mate’s businesses dropped by 25 per cent, and those opposite talk about the power prices under the Labor government. I can tell them that I was a victim of their power prices. I was an absolute victim. I speak from authority. I can tell them now. When I was in business under the LNP government, my power bill jumped—it absolutely went high.

**An opposition member** interjected.

**Mr SAUNDERS:** Those opposite were in power at that time. The first thing—and I will bring it back to my own local area—is the LNP talks about jobs and keeping regions looking after small business. However, when the LNP was in power they cut 14,000 workers. When they cut middle range public servants out of a city like Maryborough it has an effect on small business people. It has a major effect. The second thing is when they award a train contract to an Indian company that is not really good for small business in Maryborough. I did not see many of the small businesses in Maryborough relocating to India to make sure they got part of that \$4.4 billion contract that was awarded to an overseas company.

They are a couple of things that I remind the opposition of. When they stand here tonight with their holier than thou attitude I remind them that they caused a lot of problems with small business when they were in government. They cannot sack workers, take them out of a community and expect small business to compete. They cannot expect the turnover to go there. I know businesses. That dropped

dramatically under the LNP. The same businesses are now going up. One business approached me the other day. He is up 27 per cent since the Labor government came to power. His turnover has increased 27 per cent. He is very happy with the trading hours and he is very happy with the Palaszczuk Labor government.

They talk about the power prices. Let us talk about insurance in businesses that is going through the roof and rents in shopping centres. If those opposite really want to talk about increases, let us have a fair dinkum talk about that. I do not see them standing there and criticising insurance companies or the multinational building owners that are putting up rents.

I would like to say thank you to the minister. She has listened. We talked about the amendments and that proves that she has listened. I commend the bill to the House.