




Speech By  
**Fiona Simpson**

**MEMBER FOR MAROOCHYDORE**

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Record of Proceedings, 22 August 2017

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

 **Ms SIMPSON** (Maroochydore—LNP) (10.33 pm): In following the Minister for the Commonwealth Games and the Minister for Tourism, I think it is pertinent to note the contrast of this legislation that the government claims is about creating jobs with the problems with respect to the failed ID scanners—which this minister is being very quiet about—in those very same tourism areas of the Gold Coast, the Sunshine Coast and many other areas. I can tell the minister that foreign tourists who will be coming here, even if they have a foreign driver's licence, will find that many of those scanners do not scan foreign licences effectively. They have been stopped from coming into my local venues and we want to see that fixed.

In addressing the trading hours bill that this government has touted and failed to put through the parliament previously because of a number of problems with its drafting, I think we should note that small business is really the engine room of jobs here in Queensland and they deserve to be listened to. They are not bit players; they are the major players when it comes to employing people. When people think of our beautiful Sunshine Coast, the region where I live, they first think of sun, surf and the stunning natural environment.

**Mr Elmes:** And Noosa.

**Ms SIMPSON:** And they think of that place further north over the drawbridge called Noosa. When they do think of the Sunshine Coast region as a whole, they know that it is an area of great beauty. It is also one of the premier areas for small business in Australia. In fact, it has one of the highest rates of entrepreneurs in Australia—that is, self-employed small business people.

Of the 61,000 small businesses across the Sunshine Coast region, an estimated 61 per cent are sole operators. This means that our region is a powerhouse of highly motivated individuals, independent people who like to chart their own future and have a go. They are the truly courageous ones who put their own capital on the line to support themselves and their families and to create work for others. Their profits are reinvested locally and they are on the whole tremendously engaged in our local community. They work hard and their views deserve to be heard. I want to see them make a good living and to see that hard work and courage rewarded. The LNP and I stand up for small businesses because there is no union for small businesses. They are their own workforce. They are the ones who put their own capital on the line. They are the ones who often mortgage their own homes in order to create the jobs around them.

Let me talk about the small businesses in my area. We are a tourism area. We already have extensive trading hours. It is not that long ago that we saw another increase in hours for larger shopping centres, larger supermarkets. I have to say, disappointingly, that this has had a marked negative impact for the many small businesses, particularly corner stores and independent supermarkets, as there has not been a commensurate increase in customers for the increase in hours. It is very good access for customers as far as their retail experience is concerned, but there has not been a lot of extra customers and dollars.

I have heard from those small businesses who have been hurt as large operators cut into the hours they used to make their profits. Some of those large operators are able to operate with cheaper wage structures due to enterprise bargaining deals that are not available to smaller businesses. I need to mention this because there is an irony. We have a situation where in the hospitality field on the Sunshine Coast the legal opening hours are not the problem. We see many of those small businesses closed on public holidays because they simply cannot afford the workforce to operate. The small business owners themselves try to put the hours in, but ultimately I think it is time an audit was done of the number of small businesses in the hospitality sector that are actually closed or not open for the hours that they can be open because it is simply unaffordable.

I say to our Minister for Tourism, who has been silent on this, that this is a major issue for our tourism areas. I want to see these people able to make a go of it, to make a profit, to be able to employ more people—more young people and more people across all ages. I challenge this government to do an audit of the number of businesses in the hospitality sector in tourism areas that are actually closed and are not open for the number of hours that they can be. Let us have an inquiry into that, and tell the truth because we want to see those jobs grow.

When this bill was first proposed, the concerns were quite significant. On a positive note, I acknowledge that there are some amendments that we championed which I am pleased to see being addressed. I want to talk about my local motor dealers who approached me. They are not small businesses but they are very local businesses. They employ a lot of local people, they invest back into our community and they are great supporters of many community events. When the motor vehicle dealers and their workers approached me, they put a very compelling case that the original proposals the government had put forward were inappropriate for their industry.

Many of the workers who sell cars are on commission or part commission and the number of cars being sold would not increase for the amount of extra hours they would have to work, given they were being asked to work on Sundays. I appreciate that having motor vehicle operators open on a Sunday may seem to be a positive for many people, but the reality is that the extra turnover is not there and therefore the wages plus commission being received would be less for the number of cars sold. It is pleasing to see that there has been an understanding brought by the industry and there will be exemptions for motor vehicle dealers and caravan dealers, and these have been tabled today.

There are a lot of other amendments in this bill that have been tabled today. This is a recognition that a lot of things were overlooked when this bill was first put forward. That is why so many changes have been put forward today. Ultimately, if we want to see jobs grow in Queensland and we want to see people make a living and not just be the working poor, a number of other issues need to be addressed and they have not been addressed by this government. The government cannot simply say that opening hours alone will create the jobs. They need to look at the huge cost blow-outs that businesses are facing due to bad government policy. Businesses in my area have closed because of the blow-out in power costs in just the last 12 months. In the last 12 months under this government, a number have said that they cannot afford the huge increase in power costs.

We have also seen many in the hospitality sector not opening for even a part of the hours that are available on public holidays. This is something that demands an inquiry and an audit. This needs to be looked at because we have lost an opportunity to do something that we do so well in Queensland—that is, hospitality. Let us see our tourism industry prosper. Let us see them do well. Let us at least see this area have a focus on it in a way that this bill simply does not achieve.