




Speech By
Jarrold Bleijie

MEMBER FOR KAWANA

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TRADING (ALLOWABLE HOURS) AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr BLEIJIE** (Kawana—LNP) (9.29 pm): The Minister for Industrial Relations says that the ball is in our court. The Liberal National Party is the party of small business. Small business is the backbone of our economy. When we say that small business is the backbone of our economy, we mean it and it is not just rhetoric. That is why we will be opposing the legislation before the House this evening, because we back small business. From the top of Queensland to the south and from the eastern border to the western border, we will protect each and every small business in this state which the Labor Party is attacking this evening.

Members will know that over the last 2½ years the trading hours legislation has been a complete botched attempt by this Labor government to renew it, review it and reform it. We have seen piecemeal approaches put in the parliament dealing with little issues here and there. We have seen amendments to the Industrial Relations Act. Last year we saw amendments to declare Easter Sunday a public holiday. We saw the minister forget to declare it a public holiday though so businesses could trade. Last year the minister came in here and introduced legislation that would make Easter Sunday a public holiday. The business community then said, 'Yes, but you forgot to amend the allowable trading legislation to allow us to trade on a public holiday.' We then debated the IR Bill in here a few months ago. The minister slipped an amendment in there to fix that botched attempt from last year and then announced a review into trading hours and now we are debating this. This is the third or fourth attempt by this minister to try and reform—review—trading hours in this state.

Earlier the minister said that the motor traders industry does not wish to see trading on a Sunday. All she had to do was ask the motor traders industry before she introduced the bill. The reason the minister did not know about the motor traders not wanting to trade on a Sunday is that this highly independent review undertaken by former Labor member John Mickel—a highly independent review from former Labor industrial relations minister John Mickel—meant that the public did not have an opportunity to have a say into that review. That review was dominated by unions. John Mickel released the review and then the government announced what it had accepted in terms of the recommendations of the review.

There was no consultation with the Queensland community. There was no consultation with the motor traders to say, 'This is the review of Queensland's Trading (Allowable Hours) Act released in December 2016. We will now let the business community have a say on these recommendations. Let the motor traders, the butchers, the candlestick makers and everyone else have a say on the recommendations.' No! The minister announced what the government was going to do and accepted all of these recommendations. The minister then comes in here and cries poor, saying, 'We didn't know the motor traders had such an issue with Sunday trading. It came through the committee process and we'll now amend that.' If she had done her job properly a year ago when looking at this issue and spoken to the motor traders and spoken to the small independent hardware operators in this state, she would know that there were major concerns.

We will not let the government forget that this has been a botched attempt of trading hours reform. The reason we are opposing this legislation is not that the Liberal National Party does not believe there is some modernisation or reform necessary in trading hours, because we do. Rather, we do not have confidence in the process that was undertaken in order to get to where we are with this review that was compiled by John Mickel. I question the statistics where it says it is going to create an extra 945 jobs. I dispute that. So, too, do other groups like Master Grocers, the Hardware Association and the Motor Trades Association of Queensland.

The first trading hours legislation was introduced under the Goss government in 1990 and the minister may want to or should have inquired with some Labor old guard with respect to the trading hours legislation, because the sole reason for the introduction of the trading hours legislation was to protect the small business operators in the state of Queensland from the big guys such as Coles and Woolies. When this legislation was introduced in 1990, the government then had the foresight to say that we have to protect our small to medium enterprises, including our IGAs and Spars and NightOwls across the state, by introducing this legislation which allowed the competition to take place but also protected the small to medium enterprises from the big guys. It is now 2017 and I have to say that the big guys in the duopoly are much bigger than they were back in 1990. That is why it is now more important than ever in 2017 to assist and protect our small and independent retailers, particularly in regional Queensland.

In the existing regime there are three types of retail shops that are captured under the existing regulatory framework. There are exempt shops which mean that these are exempted from being regulated by the legislation. Exempt shops have unrestricted trading hours. They may trade 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year, including all public holidays, and are not required to limit the number of staff they employ. These are generally small businesses that are listed by category in the regulation and include shops such as newsagencies, chemists, ice-cream shops, fruit and veggie shops, service stations, souvenir shops and hairdressers. There are then non-exempt shops which are shops other than the exempt or independent retail shops and include shops selling wholly or partly wholesale products, shops selling motor vehicles or caravans, large retailers including supermarkets and departmental stores. These are shops like Woolworths, Coles and Bunnings and have restricted trading hours—that is, Monday to Saturday from 7 am to 9 pm in South-East Queensland. There are then independent retail stores, which is the third type of retail shop in Queensland.

If a shop is not listed in the exempt shops and meets all of the following criteria, it is classified as an independent retail shop in the act: the business is run by an individual, partnership or proprietary company and does not include a public company or related corporation; there are no more than 20 people, including the owner, engaged in the shop at any one time; there are no more than 60 people engaged by the owner in all shops throughout Queensland at any one time; and the business is not conducted within a non-exempt shop or part thereof. They have unrestricted trading hours except for Good Friday, Christmas Day and Anzac Day after 1 pm. They are generally what independent grocers like Spar, IGA and FoodWorks trade as.

The laws were originally, as I said, introduced into Queensland to assist and regulate trading hours but also to maintain competition in the industry by ensuring small to medium enterprise had an advantage over large retailers like Coles and Woolworths. If there were disputes with respect to trading hours or shops wanting to trade different hours, an application could be made to the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission. It was the LNP position in government that trading hours matters are best determined by an independent umpire, being the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission. Commencing on 1 December 2016, the QIRC determined that trading hours for all non-exempt shops in South-East Queensland, except the Brisbane CBD, Hamilton Northshore, New Farm and the Gold Coast, would be standardised to 7 am to 9 pm Monday to Saturday and 9 am to 6 pm Sundays and public holidays. This was seen as a major win for large retailers at the time that had been campaigning for longer trading particularly on Saturday, which was previously 8 am to 5 pm. Sunday hours did not change.

As outlined in the explanatory notes by the minister, the government's bill before the House has the following objective: replacing the 99 specific trading hours provisions with six trading hours provisions covering all large stores across Queensland. Dealing with that with respect to what the minister was talking about in terms of regulation and red-tape reduction, the LNP in government had a target to reduce red-tape regulation right across Queensland. In the property sector in terms of buying and selling a property, we reduced the paperwork by 40 per cent. In terms of company directors' liabilities—personal liabilities for company directors—we reduced over 3,000 statutory company liabilities. In every space every minister reduced regulation and red tape. However, the Labor government and the minister cannot hide behind the fact that reducing red tape and regulation in the

trading hours industry is going to create more jobs because it will not, because small to medium enterprises will go bust. They cannot compete with Coles and Woolies. People will be sacked and prices will go up because competition will be reduced under the Labor government's policies.

The minister has this guise that this legislation is all about red-tape reduction. When the Labor Party mentions 'red-tape reduction', it has to be taken with a grain of salt. There is nothing about red-tape reduction in this legislation. This legislation is a deal for the shoppies union. The more Coles and Woolies stores you have in Queensland, the more shoppies union members you have in Queensland. Across Australia, union membership is declining. Which is the one union that is increasing its membership? It just happens to be the shoppies union. The membership of every other union is on the decline. Every one of those members opposite sign up to these factional war lords in the union movement. Over the past 20 years in Queensland, union membership has been on the decline, but membership of the shoppies union is on the increase.

Mr Cripps: They're having a revival.

Mr BLEIJIE: They are having a revival, and that revival is taking place because Coles and Woolies are a duopoly in our retail trading sector. With respect to red-tape reduction, this legislation is a guise. There are better ways to achieve real red-tape reduction through better legislation.

This legislation also extends standard trading hours in South-East Queensland from 7 am to 9 pm Monday to Saturday. It extends trading hours from 7 am to 9 pm Monday to Friday and from 7 am to 6 pm on Saturday in regional Queensland. It standardises trading hours for Sundays and public holidays across Queensland from 9 am to 6 pm and extends trading hours in the lead-up to Christmas in all areas of the state, with shops to close at 6 pm on Christmas Eve. It removes trading hour restrictions on butchers and allows hardware stores to open on Sunday from 6 am. We have many small hardware stores that operate particularly in regional Queensland. The big guys like Bunnings come into these areas and these small operators close down. Therefore, competition is nonexistent. Who suffers? The consumers, because they end up paying higher prices because the competition is not there.

This legislation allows special tourist areas, such as Port Douglas, access to extended trading hours. In that regard, the minister is going to move an amendment because she said that there has been an oversight in relation to Cairns—that is, the minister forgot to include Cairns. This oversight is similar to when the minister forgot to include Easter Sunday, a public holiday, as a trading day. This is just another botched attempt by the minister. We expect that from this Minister for Industrial Relations.

This legislation also lifts employment thresholds for independent retail shops from 20 to 30. One would think that the independent retail sector, such as Master Grocers, would be very happy with those amendments. However, it has written to all the members of this House saying that not only the whole legislation should be opposed but also it should be ripped up and that the government should go back to the drawing board and start again with a proper independent review, not a review conducted by a former Labor industrial relations minister. This review was instigated last year. We are probably up to about 180 reviews by this Labor government.

Mr Cripps: The fastest growing industry in Queensland.

Mr BLEIJIE: I take that interjection from the honourable member for Hinchinbrook. In fact, I take that interjection even further: there are so many reviews happening in Queensland that they ought to have a department. There ought to be a director-general.

Mr Cripps: And a hotline.

Mr BLEIJIE: I take that interjection. There should be a hotline and a director-general to oversee all of these reviews. We rarely see the results of all of these reviews, but when we see the results, such as with this review, we see that there has been no consultation with the Queensland public. This was a secret little review conducted behind closed doors. The majority of the members of the review panel were from unions. The result of the review was announced to the public. The cabinet had already considered it. I guess this is one review that the cabinet has seen.

Tonight, there are reports that the cabinet does not see much; it is the Premier and the Treasurer who see everything. Considering the story that has just appeared in the *Brisbane Times* about how the cabinet operates, I am not sure if this report did go to cabinet. This report could have been a captain's call. I say to my colleagues that it was interesting to see the Premier, the Treasurer, the Deputy Premier and the Minister for Environment racing in and out of the minister's room not looking very happy. I have been sidetracked by the circus of the Labor Party and its cabinet. We would appreciate it if the minister could advise whether this report did go to cabinet.

As I said, the review was not independent. It was conducted by a former Labor industrial relations minister. The time line is that on 31 August 2016, the government announced a review of trading hours to be headed by former Speaker and Labor transport and industrial relations minister, John Mickel. On

1 September 2016, the review was welcomed by industry groups. On 19 October, 2016, the issues paper was released with a deadline of 14 November. Then on 12 February 2017—a Sunday—the Mickel reference group released its recommendations. We were still in that post Christmas-New Year period. Two days later, on 14 February, the Palaszczuk government announced its response to the Mickel report recommendations. I have been a cabinet minister and we got our packs on a Friday afternoon. The cabinet sits on a Monday. The Mickel report was handed down on the Sunday. Two days later, which would be Tuesday, the government made a decision on it.

Mr Cripps: It may not have gone to cabinet.

Mr BLEIJIE: I take that interjection. It may have gone to cabinet without the document because, under cabinet protocol, the document would have been released on Sunday. Who is running the show? The government is a mess; the cabinet is a mess. It is in chaos and crisis.

Last year, my son and I watched the sequel to *The First Avenger*. It is quite apt to talk about it, because it is called *Civil War*. All the characters could be the cabinet members sitting opposite.

Mr CRIPPS: None of them have superpowers, that's for sure.

Mr BLEIJIE: I take that interjection. I do not think any of the cabinet members opposite have any standard powers, let alone superpowers. As I said, the reference group was chaired by John Mickel and included representatives from the National Retail Association; the CCIQ; Master Grocers; the Queensland Tourism Industry Council; and the Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees' Association—the SDA, which is the shoppies union. How much money did that union give to the Labor Party while this review was taking place? Members might have a look on the ECQ website to find that out. The reference group also had representatives from the Australian Workers' Union, United Voice and the Queensland Council of Unions. Certainly, union representation dominated the committee.

This morning, this minister talked about an interim response to a workplace health and safety review in relation to industrial manslaughter. The guy who is doing the review is called Tim—I forget his surname. He is a former union official and he is reviewing workplace health and safety laws in Queensland. The government cannot keep saying that these reviews are independent; they are not. They are just jobs for their mates, jobs for former Labor MPs and jobs for union officials. That is all we are seeing.

As I said, we know that this review of trading hours was about appeasing the big retail unions, particularly the shoppies union. Last year, that union gave over \$70,000. They wrote the cheque and we get legislation introduced in the parliament. That is how they operate. As I have said in this place numerous times, serious questions have to be asked about the financial contributions of the union movement and the decisions of this government, just like when Labor questioned us when it was in opposition if business gave to the Liberal National Party.

Mr Cripps: It was off to the CMC.

Mr BLEIJIE: It was off to the CMC, as it was called at the time, and then the CCC. Of course, the Premier was elected on accountability, transparency and integrity and she was going to have this big CCC investigation into donations to political parties. When we asked, 'Will it include the unions?' all of a sudden this CCC inquiry into donations to political parties was kicked off into the long grass. We know why, because every piece of legislation comes into this place either after a cheque has been given to the Queensland division of the Australian Labor Party or there has been a meeting with Michael Ravbar of the CFMEU or with the shoppies union. A cheque is handed over to the Labor Party and then positive legislation for the union movement is introduced into this House. It has been happening for 2½ years. Tonight, I am going to say that there ought to be an inquiry into the relationship between the unions giving cheques and donations and the meetings they are having with Labor ministers and the outcomes that this parliament is getting through legislation that is introduced by Labor ministers.

It may be easy for the Liberal National Party to take the populist view and say, 'We support this bill because consumers have the right to shop whenever they want 24/7.' That would be the populist view. If we asked people, 'Would you like to have the right to shop at midnight?' Most of them would say, 'We don't need to but, yes, okay, give me the right.' That would be the populist view. However, there are unintended consequences of that populist view for small to medium enterprises, which is the backbone of the Queensland economy. This bill will have that negative impact.

As I said, the Liberal National Party is the only party in Queensland for small business, of small business and by small business. The LNP values small business. When we in the LNP say, 'Small business is the backbone of our economy,' we mean it. The Minister for Small Business and the Minister for Industrial Relations and Employment talk about small business. They go to small businesses in marginal Labor electorates. They shake hands with small business operators and say, 'We are with you,' and then they come into this place and introduce legislation that is detrimental to small business.

They come in here and talk about employment. They go to Toowoomba and talk about employment in the electorates of the honourable members for Toowoomba South and Toowoomba North and then they do not have an employment package applicable to those constituents. They go to the electorate of their colleague, the member for Bundamba, and talk about employment but do not give the member for Bundamba an employment package for her constituents; do they, member for Bundamba? Shame on the Labor government. I take the nodding from the member for Bundamba as an interjection. Take offence if you like, member for Bundamba, I will not push it. They talk about employment, but they do not have an employment package in Ipswich, they do not have an employment package in Toowoomba and they do not have an employment package on the Sunshine Coast.

Mr Watts interjected.

Mr BLEIJIE: I take that interjection from the member for Toowoomba North. As the committee report indicated, the LNP and crossbench members of the committee will not be supporting these changes because we do not think the government has adequately made the case and there are significant concerns, particularly from independent grocers, small hardware stores and motor dealers about the impact on their industry and consumers from the changes that have been put forward. Even government members on the committee recommended that motor dealers be taken out of the bill. Because the Minister for Industrial Relations and Employment botched the process, bungled the process, there are amendments to this bill. I expected amendments to come from the Minister for Industrial Relations—not as many as the racing bill that she introduced where she moved 200 amendments.

Mr Cripps: It was an amendment festival!

Mr BLEIJIE: I take the interjection. It was an amendment festival in the racing bill that the minister introduced. There were 200 amendments and then she had to vote against half of them. I have to give her credit; there are some amendments that are not as drastic as that. Fundamentally, the Minister for Industrial Relations has introduced a bill into this parliament and said motor traders will trade on Sunday. If she had talked to the motor traders she would have worked out that they did not want it and they do not want it. The government had this fanciful idea that by forcing car dealers to open on Sunday they are going to make more money and sell more cars. Wrong! What will happen is the consumer like me who goes and looks for a car on Saturday will think about it overnight and come back on Sunday. The small business operator then has to pay employees over two full days rather than just the Saturday. If you cannot buy a car from Monday to Saturday—any day of the week other than Sunday—maybe you should not buy a car.

The Motor Trades Association were completely opposed to it and the Labor government committee members were opposed to it. I thank Tristan and the team at Coastline BMW in my electorate. When this bill first came out I thought a lot of the big motor traders who have successful operations would enjoy the opportunity to trade on Sunday. I was completely wrong. I thank Tristan and Coastline BMW in my electorate for the views they put forward opposing Sunday trading and the reasons why, which is, of course, backed up with the opposition meetings we had with the Motor Trades Association of Queensland. I thank other motor traders from across all electorates who raised these issues with the LNP. The LNP were listening from day dot, not just tonight when the bill is brought in to fix a political issue that the minister has.

As I said from the start, we do not dispute the fact that the system can be modernised and simplified, but the way the government is proceeding is not the right way. It has been added to and added to as large businesses chip away at the existing regime and smaller industries add to what they have previously been granted by the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission in terms of retail hours regulation.

We are particularly concerned about the potential impact on regional Queenslanders and jobs in regional Queensland. The LNP is the party for Queensland small business and we will stand up for their interests and concerns about this legislation. What that translates to is being about pro competition which benefits consumers by keeping a lid on prices and creating jobs for all Queenslanders across all of Queensland.

As the Queensland Chamber of Commerce & Industry stated in its submission to the committee—
Queensland's shop trading laws were designed to protect small business and assist them when competing against major retailers.

...

CCIQ remains concerned about the impact of the majors' market dominance over small businesses because of the proposed reforms as contained in the Bill currently being considered by the Committee.

Queensland's 414,000 small businesses are concerned about the monopoly of major market players and their dominance of the home hardware market.

...

Overall, CCIQ believes the reforms as contained in the Bill could have been more carefully targeted to help ease the compliance burden and reduce regulatory inconsistencies, but ensure the objectives of the legislation are current and reflect the need to support small business competitiveness.

It is time to take a stand on behalf of small businesses in Queensland that have had it tough for many, many years. In a world where there is increased technology disruptions and the world marketplace is a daily reality with online shopping and increased global competitiveness, Queensland's small businesses need a friend right now more than ever they have before. That may seem like political rhetoric, but the reality is that without Queensland small business local jobs and consumer choice is put at significant risk. While our political opponents try to paint us as the friend of big business, the reverse is, in fact, true. The Liberal National Party is the party for small business owners. We believe in the spirit of enterprise and backing local mum-and-dad business operators who are the backbone of our economy.

Today the Queensland parliament is considering widespread changes to our retail trading hours regime that is another kick in the guts for our struggling small business sector in this state. If you listen to the rhetoric of the government, this is all about reducing red tape and creating jobs, but the reality is that experience in other jurisdictions means that just will not ring true. Following the decision of the independent umpire that commenced on 1 December 2016 for South-East Queensland, smaller retailers are already reporting a reduction in trade and market share, meaning that jobs are being lost and hours are already being reduced. It suits the shoppies union to have the market share centralised to the big end of town—Coles and Woolies—because it is easier for them to infiltrate these organisations and sign up more members, but mum-and-dad small businesses will not let the unions through the door because they know when they do it is going to cost them money and it will cost the employee money.

The effect of the changes made by the QIRC that commence in South-East Queensland from 1 December 2016 should have been let flow through and the effects should have been monitored before this legislation was brought to the parliament and extended across regional Queensland. But we know the fix with the shoppies union was already in, the cheque was already presented last year to the Labor Party, and the industrial relations minister, who was a union boss in another life, has done another secret deal with her union mates.

The legislation we are debating in this parliament is the result of the government's review into this issue led by John Mickel. Just two days after the report was made public the government announced its response to the recommendations. There was no time for proper consultation with key stakeholders, no time for any form of real public debate about the issues and the recommendations and no time for this divided cabinet to go shaky on the issue and backtrack from the recommendations. That time line has led to what is a botched process.

The industrial relations minister has been caught out once again putting the interests of her union mates ahead of the interests of Queensland jobseekers. Even government members of the parliamentary committee did not agree with parts of the minister's bill and effectively rolled her on the proposed changes relating to motor dealers operating on Sundays. The minister should not take credit for that; the motor traders will take credit for the campaign it ran on that. That could have been avoided if the minister had done her job properly in the first place instead of trying to rush through these reforms because of a secret deal with the shoppies union.

We are pleased to see the backdown to proposed changes in relation to motor dealers, but the whole bill needs to go back to the drawing board. Even the National Retail Association, which the minister quoted earlier, who stood next to the minister when the review was announced, made a number of recommendations to improve the flawed bill put forward by the industrial relations minister. We will not be supporting it. It needs to go back to the drawing board to start again.

I will now take a little time to look at some of the stakeholders that have put in submissions but also issued press releases in the last 24 hours. I will make a political point with respect to Master Grocers Australia, and I thank them and all the members they have: the IGAs, the Spars, the NightOwls—the independent retailers right across Queensland. We all serve our communities as members of parliament. We attend school fetes and functions and we see the Rotary and Lions clubs doing their great sausage sizzles. Who is it that donates the produce: the sausages, the hamburgers? It is always our small business operators. In eight years I have never seen Coles and Woolies donate to one of the functions that I have been involved in with respect to our local community. I can guarantee

that our local IGAs and our Spars do a lot more community service than the big guys right across Queensland. I will quote into *Hansard* what Master Grocers Australia, which represents the small guys in Queensland, states in its press release and then I will table a copy of it. The MGA states—

“Over the coming days the Queensland Government will be presenting a Bill to the parliament for debate to further liberalise trading hours in Queensland. “This is despite any consideration for the impact of this sudden change on the viability of family owned and privately run independent retailers,” according to MGA Independent Retailers.

Jos de Bruin, CEO of MGA said, “Small businesses have planned their investment in their business around being able to trade, without the overarching power of big businesses encroaching on a small window of opportunity they have to realise profits at either end of each trading day, on Saturday evenings and on Sundays”.

This group represents all of our IGAs and other small retailers. The press release continues—

He continued, ‘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 ...

The Labor Party accuses us of being in bed with big business, but small business is saying that the Labor Party is in bed with big business. They continue—

The Government has already chosen, by promising to overhaul trading hours, to 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.”

Small retailers last year lost their fight in the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission against the growing power of the chains in South East Queensland. This decision has forced many independent retail businesses to assess their commercial viability and employment levels as this move did not create additional jobs and sales growth but instead supplanted sales from the Queensland independent retail sector to the large dominant chains.

I table a copy of that press release for the benefit of the House.

Tabled paper. Media release titled ‘Queensland Government Supports extending trading hours despite risking the livelihoods of thousands of independent Queensland Retail Businesses’ [\[786\]](#).

I will also table the MGA Independent Retailers facts sheet for Queensland’s trading hours liberalisation. The minister talked about the jobs that this will create, but, in a nutshell, the MGA states—

The facts are:

- Giving the green light to Coles and Woolworths to open longer hours makes it even harder for independent, community-based businesses to compete.
- Community-based family-owned businesses provide vital support to the heart of townships and if they’re forced to scale down or close their doors a direct adverse impact ripples across the community.
- As local businesses close, consumers have less shopping choice.
- As local businesses close, there are fewer options for new market offers.
- More market dominance makes it easier for the majors to increase prices—history has shown this especially occurs with fresh produce.
- Queenslanders lose jobs because jobs lost in independent stores are replaced in major chains at half the rate.
- When you shop with your local community supermarket your money stays in the local economy, rather than off to the headquarters of the national chains. Keeping money local supports other local businesses and community ventures.

We have seen that right across Queensland. I note that a couple of members from rural and regional Queensland are in the House, so I will highlight this part of the facts sheet, which states—

Independent research* in rural and regional Queensland shows that voters do not want more power to Coles and Woolworths:

- Voters are far more concerned about jobs and improving basics like transport: the question of extended hours for supermarket shopping is a non-issue.
- The vast majority of voters (85%) are satisfied with opening hours as they are.
- For 66% of voters it is “extremely” or “very” important that local independent supermarkets survive. 60% do not want to see more dominance for Coles/Woolworths.
- 71% agree that “allowing large nationally operated retail businesses the ability to determine their own trading hours will harm independently owned community stores and reduce consumer choice”.

That is from research conducted in rural and regional Queensland. I table a copy of that facts sheet for the benefit of the House.

Tabled paper. Document titled ‘Facts sheet for Qld trading hours liberalisation’ [\[787\]](#).

The minister talked about hardware stores. Hardware Australia opposes what the minister is doing. The minister stands in here and talks about how great this is for hardware stores, but I think she must only be talking about Bunnings, because the association that represents hardware stores put a submission to the commission opposing the legislation. The Motor Trades Association of Queensland

opposes the legislation, the CCIQ expresses concerns about it, the Master Grocers Association opposes the legislation and Hardware Australia opposes it. A letter that I have received from Hardware Australia states—

Dear Hon Member,

We have been made aware of the impending vote in parliament over the proposed changes to trading hours.

We would seek your help in blocking the proposed amendments particularly as they relate to changes to larger Hardware stores. Attached is our original submission to the inquiry and our initial letter to you.

Opposing this amendment would demonstrate your support of the 1000 small independent, family run hardware businesses who are struggling against a market monopoly. The numbers in our submission whilst seemingly small in comparison to what big business will tell you, actually means the difference between viability or closure for small operators.

That letter is from Hardware Australia, which represents over 1,000 small independent family run hardware businesses in Australia.

I also table a copy of the letter that Hardware Australia sent to me on 14 February. I thank Clint Spence, the Queensland chair, and Ian Cornwell, the national chair of Hardware Australia for their letter, which includes their submission to the committee.

Tabled paper: Email, dated 10 May 2017, and attachment, from the Executive Officer of Hardware Australia to the member for Kawana, Mr Jarrod Bleijie MP, regarding trading hours [\[788\]](#).

I do not have to table the submission from the Master Grocers Association, because it has been lodged with the Finance and Administration Committee. I point out the executive summary in the Master Grocers Association submission, which importantly states—

MGA would be supportive of amendments to the Act if the laws were likely to fully achieve the objectives that have been presented as the outcomes of these amendments.

However, MGA strongly disputes the claims by the Queensland Government that there will be advantages for Queensland in these amendments.

We strongly dispute that there will be an additional 945 equivalent full time positions gained by these amendments as the Government claims. The figure proposed is purely speculative. The likelihood of increased jobs cannot be justified on the basis of increasing the right of Coles and Woolworths (the Chains) to trade longer hours at the expense of smaller stores.

Item 12 of the summary states—

We query what will happen to the jobs of those employed in smaller shops. If those jobs disappear there may be some that will find work with the chains but certainly not all. The ability of Coles and Woolworths to utilise their self serve checkouts and maintain staff minimum levels at certain times during the day will prevent whole sale employment of new staff. The Queensland Government simply has not fully investigated the impact of store closure in regional Queensland. They have underestimated the need and support there exists for the local shop and therefore the needs and wishes of the Queensland people.

Item 13 states—

Whilst Queenslanders would support the reduction or elimination of bureaucratic red tape there can still be reorganisation of regulations without the drastic step of extending trading hours throughout Queensland.

They go on to talk about what I mentioned when the legislation was first introduced about helping small to medium enterprises. The MGA states—

As previously explained independent retailers in Queensland have a small window of opportunity to compete with the bigger retailers ... by holding the status of being exempt under the Act. This status has allowed them to trade at times when "non-exempt shops" or larger stores are not permitted to trade. To retain their status as "independent shops" these stores are not allowed to have any more than 20 employees on the shop floor at any one time.

The MGA goes on to talk about when the QIRC handed down the decision to extend trading hours for some larger retailers and the effect that that had across the 200 stores that they represent. They state that the average lost wholesale sales per week was \$800,000; converted to lost retail scan sales it was \$968,000; and annualised retail sales was \$50.3 million. Direct employment lost at 12 per cent employment as a ratio to sales was \$6 million; lost employment hours at \$22 per hour was 274,560 hours lost; and FTE based on 37.5 hours per week was down 7,322 employee weeks.

It is really interesting to look at the case study that the MGA put in their submission, which included Walters IGA at Mundingburra in the electorate of the minister. For the benefit of the member for Mundingburra, I quote that case study—

Mundingburra IGA is a 1000m2 supermarket located 5 minutes for the CBD of Townsville. Its operating hours are 6am to 10pm, 7 days a week. It is owned and operated by Adam and Maree Westbury, who have owned the store since March 2013. Mundingburra IGA currently employs 26 staff. Adam and Maree advise that:

- In 2014, the tourist area of Townsville was granted extended trading hours on a Sunday morning from an 11am opening to an 8am opening for stores at:

- Coles North Ward (was a Bi-Lo); and
 - Woolworths Townsville CBD
- The direct impact on their store was a loss of \$3,000 per Sunday in sales and \$5,000 loss for the week.
 - As an already struggling business competing with 25 other full service supermarkets in the Townsville region including 6 Coles, 13 Woolworths and 6 IGAs and another 12 or more smaller stores ... in a population of around 200k people, they had to reduce costs by:
 - Making their 2IC redundant
 - Increasing their own hours by 40 hours to cover the 2IC who they could no longer afford;
 - Reducing their casual labour force by 3 hour per day to a total of 21 hours (School boys / girls);
 - Reducing store's cleaning contract by 2 days a week or 6 hours a week detrimentally affecting another local business; and
 - Reducing their donations to schools and sporting groups by \$3,000 per year.
 - Adam and Maree are now both forced to work 6 days a week undertaking roughly 65 hours per week each.
 - Prior to the 2014 decision, in 2007 the whole district of Townsville was granted Sunday trading hours of 11am to 5pm. Mundingburra IGA was trading at \$100k per and employed over 32 staff. Following the 2007 decision its sales dropped to \$60k per week due to the direct change in hours by Coles and Woolworths and staff numbers were slashed to 20.
 - Prior to the 2007 decision, the only stores that operated were independent community supermarkets consisting of 4 Walters IGA stores (1 now operated by Woolworths) and one IGA on Magnetic Island. The 4 Walters IGA stores had a combined trading income of \$460k per Sunday. The impact of allowing Coles and Woolworths to trade on a Sunday saw a direct reduction of the following in sales:
 - \$370k loss of sales on a Sunday to \$90k
 - \$21k loss of sales on a Saturday
 - \$10k loss of sales on a Monday
 - \$401k per week loss of sales for the 4 stores

Adam and Maree Westbury report that it has taken nearly 9 years to recoup the lost sales for their store and the store is now barely breaking even after posting a financial loss in the last 9 years. Any changes in trading hours for any day of the week will have a detrimental impact on the store's immediate future and all of their remaining 26 staff.

That is a case study from Mundingburra where the minister—

Mr Power: It is not a case study.

Mr BLEIJIE: Sorry, it is not a case study. I take the ridiculous interjection from the member for Logan.

Mr Power interjected.

Mr BLEIJIE: I take the ridiculous interjection. How out of touch is the member for Logan with respect to this issue? I talk about the Westberrys. I talk about their business going broke. I talk about the reduction in trading hours and the financial support—

Government members interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Miss Barton): Order! I call the member for Kawana.

Mr BLEIJIE: I talk about the Westberrys' condition in Mundingburra. That area is represented by a Labor member of parliament—

Mr Power: You used the wrong terminology.

Mr BLEIJIE: I used the wrong terminology. It is the terminology from the case study for the Mundingburra IGA. It is their story. You do not do their books, do you? It is their story. They are represented—

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Direct your comments through the chair, please.

Mr BLEIJIE: They are represented by a Labor government member and the member sitting up the back has the hide to disbelieve the case study that has been put forward by the Westberrys in a submission that was in fact presented at the parliamentary inquiry into the legislation we are debating tonight.

Is he saying it is a lie? Is he saying the Westberrys are lying? Is he saying MGA have misrepresented this and are in breach and should be sent off to the Ethics Committee for being in contempt of parliament because they lied to a parliamentary committee? Is that what you are saying, member for Logan? Is that what the member for Logan is saying? Member for Logan, I suggest when you are off to these community cabinet meetings right around Queensland—you will not be there; you will never be in cabinet—but when you are represented by the employment minister—

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Kawana, direct your comments through the chair, please.

Mr BLEIJIE: When the member for Logan is represented by these fly-in fly-out cabinets on regional employment opportunities and the Westberrys sit down with the employment minister, I am going to make sure they know what you said about them tonight. When their business goes broke—and hopefully it does not; they foresee it is going to go broke because of the legislation the Labor Party has introduced tonight—you can look them in the eye and say that you did not care.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Kawana, direct your comments through the chair, please.

Mr BLEIJIE: He did not care. That is a case study. If the member for Logan wants any more case studies he only needs to look at the MGA report tabled in the parliamentary committee. There are other case studies in there. There are other case studies from other electorates with real stories of real people. Given the member for Logan wants to know about case studies, I am going to read him another one because I have another 18 minutes left on the clock. This case study is from Tin Can Bay.

Mr Perrett interjected.

Mr BLEIJIE: In the member for Gympie's electorate. It reads—

While numerous projections were made as to the benefits of extending trading hours for non-exempt stores in the Tin Can Bay area in 2009, MGA's member reports the following:

- Wages were reduced by 400 Hours per week following Woolworths opening in mid 2009 resulting in significant redundancies.
- Wages were reduced by a further \$960 a week following Woolworths commencement of Sunday trading. Once again redundancies were necessary.
- Our member experienced a loss of trade of 40% on Sunday with the introduction of Sunday trading for non-exempt stores.
- Due to the decrease in revenue our member was forced to cease their community support to a number of local organisations and charities.
- The IGA store is still open but only just and 20 other small business stores have closed in the immediate trading precinct.
- The adjacent shopping centre (Dolphin Shopping centre) had a 100% occupancy when our member purchased their store in 2005 but decreased to approximately 65% occupancy after the Woolworths opened 8 kms out of town—many small businesses closed their doors.
 - o MGA has attached this submission the academic document of Dr Robert Baker who highlights the association between the deregulation of trading hours and the decrease in shop occupancy.
- There was a massive disruption to the community centre and total fragmentation of the hub.
- The store was sold due to the consequences of the deregulation of trading hours in the area.

They conclude—

MGA submits that the proposals by the Queensland Government to make amendments to the Act are not—

I repeat: are not—

in the best interests of a significant sector of the retail industry. The impact on small businesses will be damaging and through their demise result in seriously affecting the Queensland economy. There will not be massive jobs growth, there will not be any significant benefits to the tourism industry and the beneficiaries of the changes will be those who are not Queensland based.

I repeat: the beneficiaries of these reforms tonight will be those who are not Queensland based. They continue—

MGA seeks that the Government reconsiders the proposed amendments to the Act so as to ensure the future of thousands of small business owners.

That is from Master Grocers Australia Ltd trading as MGA Independent Retailers that represent all the IGAs and small independent grocery stores right across Queensland. They speak on behalf of their members. The case studies are real stories of real people. These case studies are from real Queenslanders who have serious objections to this legislation.

Now members on this side of the House will have to help me. I assume the government has a minister for small business. I have never heard from them, but I assume they do.

An opposition member: There are rumours.

Mr BLEIJIE: I take the interjection. There are rumours that the Labor government has a small business minister. If someone can find out for me who that is in the next 15 minutes that would be appreciated. Hypothetically, if they do have a small business minister, I would be keen to see what he or she says tonight.

If that minister is sitting in their ministerial office on \$330,000 a year and they are being briefed by their department from a small business perspective and they receive a submission from the MGA, Hardware Australia, CCIQ and the Motor Trades Association of Queensland, how could that minister representing small business come in here tonight and support this legislation? They could not justify—

Mr Hart: Over there.

Mr BLEIJIE: I take the interjection. Do we have a minister for small business? Apparently, the member for Algester is the Minister for Small Business. I am not sure whether the member for Algester, the small business minister—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr BLEIJIE: I am as surprised as the members at the back to know that there is a small business minister, but I am hopeful that the Minister for Small Business—

Mr Cripps: It might not have gone to cabinet.

Mr BLEIJIE: I have to take the interjection from the member for Hinchinbrook considering the *Brisbane Times* story that has gone online a couple of hours ago. Perhaps the minister did not know about this because it did not go to cabinet.

Mr Cripps: She didn't get a chance.

Mr BLEIJIE: She did not get a chance to talk about it in cabinet. The Premier and the Treasurer made a captain's call and away they go like the secret deal with Adani. Maybe the Minister for Small Business did not even know this was on the agenda and did not have the opportunity to talk about it. If that were the case that would be sad.

We have now worked out that there is a minister for small business. When I asked the House quite legitimately if there was a minister for small business she could have volunteered the fact that she was the Minister for Small Business on \$330,000 a year. It would have saved the member for Burleigh googling who the Queensland small business minister is or looking on the parliamentary website. She could have saved us all the hassle and me filibustering for another 15 minutes.

We have a small business minister in the Labor government. Is the minister going to speak tonight? Is the minister going to speak on the bill? If the minister is going to speak on the bill, I will ensure I am here and listen to how she tries to justify how she will vote for this legislation which will be detrimental to small business operators across the state. How will she justify supporting this bill having possibly received Hardware Australia correspondence, Master Grocers correspondence, CCIQ correspondence and Motor Trades Association correspondence?

As I said, the LNP will not be supporting this bill. It needs to go back to the drawing board. It was another botched attempt by the Minister for Industrial Relations to try to do something. I urge the crossbench—this is going to be important. When we either vote on this bill in the early hours of the morning or vote on this bill tomorrow, it is going to be important for the crossbench to look at their electorates and work out whether they can go into their local IGA or their local hardware store and tell them face to face that they did support or did not support their local IGA, their local independent grocery store, and their local hardware store—that they backed the small guys in this place or they backed the monopoly in Queensland in the hardware sector and the duopoly in the grocery sector. Where will the crossbench sit?

I urge the crossbench members to vote with the LNP and oppose this legislation—to stick up for small business and to work with the LNP so that we can develop proper legislation that reduces regulation and red tape but still enshrines and ensures our small businesses have a fighting chance in the state of Queensland and can keep employing some great young Queenslanders as their first job right across Queensland. I encourage the crossbench members to stand up for Queensland small businesses, to stand up for the small businesses in their electorate, because small business is the backbone of our communities. It is the backbone of our economy. We want to make sure that the money spent in Queensland stays in Queensland. The LNP will stand up for all small businesses and Queensland consumers and stand against secret deals with union bosses that are in Labor's self-interest and not in the interests of Queenslanders. I urge all members of parliament to vote against this job-destroying, destructive legislation.