




Speech By
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TRADING (ALLOWABLE HOURS) AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr LANGBROEK** (Surfers Paradise—LNP) (5.08 pm): I rise to speak to the Trading (Allowable Hours) Amendment Bill. I note that, as the member for Pine Rivers said, this is the third time this bill has come before the House. I want to thank the committee for their work in assessing this bill. I note that they were unable to come to a conclusion as to whether the bill should be passed and had significant disagreement there. I will come to their recommendations in a moment.

The aims of the bill are to simplify and standardise trading hours across Queensland. Whilst we in the LNP recognise the need for reform, this bill is an attempt by Anastacia Palaszczuk and Labor to prescribe a one-size-fits-all approach to our diverse state and businesses, which has been structured to favour big businesses and the unions that bankroll Labor. As I mentioned, it is a bill that the committee could not even agree on. I note their three recommendations. The first recommendation states—

That the Trading (Allowable Hours) Amendment Bill 2017 be amended to include the Cairns CBD in the defined tourist area.

The second recommendation states—

The committee recommends that the Bill be amended, as per the Queensland Treasury's advice, to refer to an appropriate address for the Westfield Chermside and Westfield Garden City shopping centres.

The third recommendation states—

The committee recommends that the Bill be amended to exclude the application of the changes to motor vehicle or caravan retailers.

This is an amendment that the government's own committee members recommended. As I understand it, that is one of the suite of 32 amendments that the minister has brought in. I would like to point out that the amendments circulated would not have happened without LNP intervention.

Mr Costigan: That's exactly right.

Mr LANGBROEK: I take the interjection from the member for Whitsunday. He has shown me some rather large hardware stores in the Mackay area that are now derelict and empty as a result of the significant downturn they have had in that area. These are shops like Mitre 10 that are often operated by mum-and-dad traders which are going to suffer from the extension of these trading hours to all of these areas that are very, very different.

Mr Costigan: One hundred and thirty-four years.

Mr LANGBROEK: Again, I take that interjection. One of these companies had been trading for 134 years in the Mackay area. The competition they have had to face—due to the different enterprise bargain arrangements for their employees compared to some of the other companies—has meant there has been an unfair competition path for these shops and they have been unable to keep going.

Ms Grace: That is ridiculous.

Mr LANGBROEK: They are the things that we know have happened. It is fairly obvious that Labor do not know whether they are Arthur or Martha when it comes to trading hours, and the greatest example is the Commonwealth Games. We have two Labor ministers who are at odds with each other about trading hours during the Commonwealth Games. On the one hand we have the Attorney-General, the member for Redcliffe, saying there is no way that pubs and clubs will be given special extended trading hours during the Commonwealth Games. She has even refused to offer special licences to Gold Coast clubs and pubs during 2018 for the games. After the debacle that we saw in here this morning, who knows what is going to happen with trading hours on the Gold Coast? Following the issues with scanners, we have heard that that is going to be reviewed in consultation with industry, but the Attorney-General has refused to issue any extended trading hours during the Commonwealth Games.

We then have the current minister here, the member for Brisbane Central, saying that she does want extended trading hours for restaurants and cafes during the games. That means it is okay to have meals during the Commonwealth Games with extended trading hours, but it is not okay to have a drink. That is one of the things that will potentially make us a laughing stock to the other 70 countries in the Commonwealth which are going to be there. It will be interesting to hear how many special extra dignitary protection officers we are going to have for all of the dignitaries who are going to be here next year, because that is apparently the only way that Prince Frederik got into Jade Buddha over the weekend—that is, by seeking some sort of special exemption to the laws that the Attorney-General and the Premier both said this morning in question time apply to everyone. Which is it? Do the laws apply to everyone, or do they not apply to particular dignitaries who are afforded the assistance of dignitary protection units? That is where this government cannot get it right when it comes to trading hours—a difference between pubs and clubs and a difference between restaurants and cafes.

The LNP is not standing in the way of a streamlined approach for trading hours extensions during the Commonwealth Games. This can happen through the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission. As the shadow minister for the Commonwealth Games and a proud Gold Coast local, I have always said that I will provide bipartisan support for good legislation for the games and my stance has not changed. On 25 May 2017 in the *Courier-Mail*, Minister Grace had the audacity to tell small business owners that this bill would help small businesses. The minister said—

We want to slash the number of trading hours provisions in Queensland from 99 to just seven—a red tape reduction of 93 per cent ... It's high time the LNP supported reform, instead of ignoring what retailers and consumers actually want.

I can assure the House that this is not what small businesses want, with the CCIQ labelling the 'big guys' the winners and small and independent stores the losers in this bill. In a media release, CCIQ senior policy adviser Catherine Pham said—

The State Government has been pushing for this Bill from a red tape reduction perspective, but reducing red tape is about removing excessive regulation that is considered redundant or bureaucratic ... Small businesses who have a competitive edge in an uneven playing field, by way of the current shop trading hour arrangements, certainly did not view shop trading hours as being redundant—it was their lifeline. We don't agree with Minister Grace's comments, which implied that changes to the state's trading hours' arrangement 'is a 93 (sic) per cent reduction in red tape'.

MGA Independent Retailers had this to say about the bill—

... 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 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.

Labor has failed to explain the benefit of these changes in trying to hoodwink Queenslanders with another botched review. Some ask: why would Labor want to prop up large businesses and the supermarket duopoly as opposed to businesses run by mum-and-dad business owners in our state? As rightly pointed out by my colleagues, the non-government members of the committee, Coles and Woolworths have over 200,000 union affiliated employees on their payroll. Naturally, smaller independent traders cannot compete with the lower wages paid by the big, non-exempt operators under their union negotiated EBA. This may result in net job losses to the retail sector, as opposed to the unsubstantiated 945 job increases mentioned in the report.

It is worth noting that, of the nine members of the reference group, which includes the chair, four were unions—the shoppies union, the AWU, United Voice and the Queensland Council of Unions. It is obvious the government had made up their mind, and that was to take their marching orders from the shoppies and disregard the impact of their changes on industry and consumers. Minister Grace Grace needs to do her job properly. Bringing in 32 amendments and bringing this to the House for the third time is not doing the job properly.

The LNP recognises that reforms are needed. However, this flawed bill will not work in our diverse state or our mum-and-dad run businesses. We have the example that hardware businesses are still in the dark, and I have mentioned them already in Central Queensland where there are significant challenges for many of those businesses where they have had significant downturns. Their concerns are unaddressed by the current amendments. In fact, the only thing this bill shows is that Labor care more about the unions that bankroll them than the people of Queensland.