




Speech By
Peter Russo

MEMBER FOR SUNNYBANK

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TRADING (ALLOWABLE HOURS) AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr RUSSO** (Sunnybank—ALP) (12.40 pm): I rise today in the House to debate the Trading (Allowable Hours) Amendment Bill 2017. I will be recommending that the bill be passed, and I base my recommendations on the following information that I wish to put before the House regarding the bill. When the Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations, Minister for Racing and Minister for Multicultural Affairs, Grace Grace, introduced the bill into the House to amend the Trading (Allowable Hours) Act 1990 she stated—

The Palaszczuk government is today introducing the most significant changes to Queensland's retail trading hours in more than two decades.

The minister went on to say that the changes in this bill will modernise and simplify current trading hours to support jobs, cut red tape and increase choice for consumers.

The bill deals with an important issue that emerged, with 99 specific trading hours provisions contained within the orders of the QIRC. These will be replaced with the introduction of this legislation by just six trading hours provisions covering all large stores across the state. Queensland Treasury has estimated that the proposed changes will have the potential to increase gross state product by up to \$79 million and support an additional 945 full-time-equivalent jobs.

What do these reforms mean? The allowable trading hours under the act will be extended in South-East Queensland from 7 am to 9 pm Monday to Saturday, and this is in accordance with the decision by the QIRC handed down in late 2016. In regional areas trading hours will be from 7 am to 9 pm Monday to Friday and from 7 am to 6 pm on Saturdays. Trading hours on Sundays and public holidays will be standardised. Importantly, regional towns which currently do not have Sunday and public holiday trading will be able to opt in to trading hours through an application to the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission.

The introduction of these matters arises out of a comprehensive review of Queensland retail trading hours by an independent reference group chaired by former Speaker and QUT School of Justice Associate Professor John Mickel. Once again, we have the Palaszczuk Labor government showing courage and leadership to make the hard decisions that are in the best interests of all Queenslanders.

The review was announced on 31 August 2016 in response to concerns raised by business and consumers in the community that Queensland trading hours arrangements were complex, confusing and acted as a disincentive to business expansion, employment and economic growth. The review received over 170 submissions from businesses, consumers, workers and other community representatives. It makes perfect sense to standardise trading hours across Queensland as this will provide customers, businesses and workers with greater certainty.

I now turn to the Finance and Administration Committee's report on the bill. The object of the bill is to simplify and standardise trading hours across Queensland. I stated previously in the debate that the number of variations to trading hours across the state was approximately 99 and led to much confusion. This issue will be remedied by the passing of this legislation. The opposition often state in

this House that they are all about looking after small business and the cutting of red tape. Here is their chance to be part of the fight to cut red tape and support the passing of this legislation. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the staff of the Finance and Administration Committee for their support and hard work. I would also like to thank my fellow committee members for their work on this report. Whilst we were unable to reach consensus on this occasion, perhaps today may be a different day.

The committee considered evidence from a wide range of stakeholders, and I take this opportunity to thank them for their time and effort in writing submissions and appearing before the committee. Several stakeholders consider that deregulation of trading hours will have a negative impact on small business. I disagree. When one looks at the evidence from other jurisdictions where there has been a relaxation or total deregulation of trading hours one sees that, essentially, changes to trading hours in other jurisdictions did not reduce the participation of small business.

It was interesting to hear the member for Kawana indicate that trading hours should be left to the independent empire, being the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission. Earlier in the debate he indicated that there is a need for some modernisation in the trading hours sphere. I put to the member for Kawana that this is what the Trading (Allowable Hours) Amendment Bill does. Legislation is often necessary to bring together decisions of courts and commissions to take out the confusion or duplication which through no fault of the tribunal or the court can creep in to decisions over time, and this is what has occurred here. This legislation, as I have previously stated, does this by reducing nearly 99 specific trading hours provisions to six trading hours provisions. Dare I say, that is modernising trading hours and taking out uncertainty for both business and consumers.

There are many challenges facing small business and it is Labor that can address these issues. The threat of Amazon moving into Australia in the area of online grocery shopping is only one of these threats. Buying groceries online is a reality now and the move will no doubt impact on all businesses, big and small.

In conclusion, I would like to touch on the moratorium provided by the legislation and its effect. Last but not least, I would like to address the issues raised by motor vehicle and caravan retailers. The motor vehicle industry is currently undergoing huge changes and its trading model is under attack. The motor trade and caravan industry is also being reviewed by the federal government, and its findings will no doubt impact on how it does business. Driverless cars and their pending inclusion in the car market space will have some impact in the very near future.

Whilst the member for Kawana acknowledges the lobbying by motor trader members in his electorate, my understanding is that the committee system is designed to take evidence and then make recommendations, and that is exactly what happened here. During the review by the committee into this bill we were able to listen to what the industry was saying to us and make recommendations. To me, that shows that the committee system is working well and that the minister is doing the job tasked to her.

I also understand that, just because a committee makes a recommendation to the minister, the minister does not necessarily have to accept that recommendation. It is the mechanism of the committee listening to the community, reviewing what they have been told and then making a recommendation. It is simply not true that there was a lack of consultation. We listened, we made the recommendation and the rest is history. I commend the bill to the House.