



Speech By  
**Ray Stevens**

**MEMBER FOR MERMAID BEACH**

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Record of Proceedings, 25 May 2017

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

**Mr STEVENS** (Mermaid Beach—LNP) (12.16 pm): I rise to speak to this union-building thought-bubble bill proposed by the Palaszczuk Labor government which is another example of the review-heavy but legislation-light approach of the Palaszczuk government. This is more legislation that promotes union-employing companies at the expense of the small business trader. It is absolutely the height of hypocrisy for members on the other side of the parliament to put forward legislation to supposedly look after business, particularly small business, when almost all of their backgrounds are as union hacks and political staffers, apart from a couple of good operators such as Tricky Ricky's moonlight towing service and Brucey's banana split parlour—

**Mr HINCHLIFFE:** I rise to a point of order. There have been a number of rulings enunciated on many occasions about referring to members by their appropriate titles.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Ms Farmer): Thank you, Leader of the House. I was just about to make that very point. Member for Mermaid Beach, I ask you to withdraw.

**Mr STEVENS:** I withdraw.

**Mr WILLIAMS:** I rise to a point of order. I take offence at the comments. I ask that they be withdrawn.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** I think that at the same time you rose to your feet the member was withdrawing.

**Mr STEVENS:** The Trading (Allowable Hours) Amendment Bill 2017 proposes to restructure trading hours provisions across Queensland to simplify and reduce the administrative burden on Queensland businesses, no matter their size. It is an outcome of a trading hours review headed by Mr John Mickel. The report of that review was provided to the Palaszczuk Labor government on 22 December. Conclusions could be drawn as to who was heard, particularly in relation to some of the traders affected by this bill—not the reference group—including industry groups and retailers. More to the point, the legislation was driven by this unionised Palaszczuk Labor government.

I notice that the Minister for Industrial Relations has just introduced into the House more union-promoting legislation, which is typical of the last 2½ years of this government. The government has concerned itself completely with union matters. The unions are the puppeteers for the puppets that they put into this House. Unfortunately, rather than getting on with the job of getting Queensland going, the Labor members in this House have just been the puppets dancing to the tune of the puppeteers of the union movement.

After a very extensive inquiry we will again be looking at matters that promote union membership, which is rapidly falling. I am told by the shadow minister that the shoppies union is probably the only one growing throughout the state. The unions are trying to promote union membership so they can put more members on the ground for this tired, do-nothing Labor government.

This review was initially welcomed by industry groups and retailers, as there is no doubt in my mind or the minds of my colleagues that the current system has become far too complicated and unwieldy. However, in typical Labor fashion, the minister and the Palaszczuk Labor government have botched this legislation.

As a small business owner on the Gold Coast in the 1980s and 1990s and being in the big shopping centres such as Pacific Fair and the Paradise Centre at Surfers Paradise, amongst others, I understand completely the power of these large supermarket chains, Woolies and Coles. As members would know, they are now even dominating the liquor supply industry throughout Australia in terms of their market share. All they do is squeeze, squeeze, squeeze small business operators.

Open-all-hours—to borrow the name of the famous ABC show of yesteryear—trading gives them another advantage to again try to eradicate some of their competition, the small business operators throughout Queensland. Open-all-hours trading is hard work. They pay top dollar to their employees, as per the agreements through the Fair Work Commission. This legislation will circumvent this through two major provisions. One is non-exempt shops, as they are defined in the bill. This will give the duopoly of Australian retailing, Woolies and Coles, another advantage through their 200,000 members of the shoppies union on EBAs with Woolies and Coles. This gives them a dollar trading advantage over the guy operating the corner store in our suburbs. This is particularly the case in regional areas. This is going to create another problem. We will probably lose more jobs rather than create the 900 jobs as suggested in the Mickel report. That is absolute rubbish. All the big operators, as we know—

**Ms Grace** interjected.

**Mr STEVENS:** Despite what the minister keeps saying in her interjections, all the big operators do to save money is cut out staff. We have seen checkouts become increasingly automated. That is exactly where the store packing and all the rest of it will head—

**Ms Grace** interjected.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Ms Farmer): Thank you, Minister. I call the member for Mermaid Beach.

**Mr STEVENS:** This will mean fewer jobs in the future. The jobs that will be lost with small traders will, unfortunately, not be regained because they will all be out of business because of the actions of the large operators. It is these businesses and existing businesses such as independent grocers that did not receive proper consultation. They are extremely concerned that the bill will lead to job losses and give more of the market share to larger business. That is in direct contrast to the Palaszczuk government's supposed primary objective of ensuring changes increase both employment and economic activity. I say 'supposed primary objective', as it is plain from the public report release date and the government response, only two days later, that the union-kowtowing Palaszczuk Labor government had received their shoppies union orders to disregard the impact of the changes on industry and consumers. Indeed, I and the other non-government members of the Finance and Administration Committee agree that this bill should not be passed due to these concerns and the difficulties with the overall expected outcomes of the changes.

In the committee report is a non-government members' statement of reservation which was brilliantly written and contains matters that hit the nail right on the head in terms of the long-term issues.

**An opposition member** interjected.

**Mr STEVENS:** I am not sure who wrote this statement of reservation, but they did a wonderful job on it. Even the government members on the Finance and Administration Committee could not support the legislation as put forward.

**Mr Costigan:** That says it all.

**Mr STEVENS:** Exactly. I should not take the interjection from the member for Whitsunday because he is out of his seat, but I did hear the interjection. It says it all that the government members took on board the representations from the motor vehicle and caravan traders who had not been consulted but who had had the proposed legislation foisted upon them by the minister and the Labor government. They were all, to a man and woman, upset about the lack of consultation in drafting this bill. Government members joined with non-government members and rejected the legislation as proposed. I am pleased to see—

**Mr Power** interjected.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! Member for Logan, please cease interjecting.

**Mr STEVENS:** Government members joined with non-government members in relation to the unacceptable part of the legislation. The minister has corrected that situation. I understand that, through amendments that will be moved later, this will be taken out of the legislation. That is a win for the non-government members and the government members of the Finance and Administration Committee.

One recommendation of the committee was to correct the oversight excluding the Cairns CBD from the defined tourist area—I do not know how that was dreamed up—where special tourist areas such as Port Douglas are allowed extended trading hours to meet the needs of domestic and international tourists. This is an important consideration for these regional communities. Another recommendation, as per Queensland Treasury's advice, was to refer to an appropriate address for the Westfield Chermside and Westfield Garden City shopping centres rather than property descriptions which may change over time under expansion. I understand that the minister has now moved to include Pacific Fair.

We have had a long history of changes to Pacific Fair. It was formerly in the Albert shire. I happened to be part of that council as they expanded. I was a trader in Pacific Fair. They are very tough operators. We did get some infrastructure commitments out of Pacific Fair for their last expansion. They have now wised up and I doubt strongly that we will see any more infrastructure commitments to account for the traffic created by the expansion of these shopping centres in the future.

While these two recommendations show that the characteristic haphazard approach to legislation by the Palaszczuk Labor government is continuing, it is the third recommendation which shows their unscrupulous union-kowtowing legislative approach must have limits. The third recommendation relates to Sunday trading for motor dealers and caravan dealers. The import of those changes must not go unnoticed as that is a clear divergence from the explanatory notes, which optimistically declare that both business and consumers would benefit. In the case of motor dealers and caravan sales it was emphatically suggested that it would not.

It is my and my colleagues' view that the changes proposed in this bill are not the answer to the current system, as the Palaszczuk Labor government and this failing Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations and Racing have not only failed to make their case for their changes but also failed to explain what benefits there could be while attempting to deceive Queenslanders by presenting another botched review. Even the review itself was carried out by a body of nine people, five of whom were strongly unionised in their interest. There was always going to be a majority union outcome with the Mickel review. That has been presented as the reason going forward.

The review, it must be said, needs to be taken back to the drawing board so that Minister Grace and the Palaszczuk government can try again to do the job properly for Queensland, with proper consultation with small business including the independent grocers, as the bill in its current form does not benefit them or everyday Queenslanders. I do understand that it is an easy sell to say, 'We will give more shoppers the opportunity to shop at midnight or one o'clock in the morning or all day every day.' The public would say, 'That is a great thing,' without knowing the consequences of the job losses and the closure of small business. As the shadow minister did a wonderful job last night pointing out, the LNP stands up for small business and Labor does not care a fig.

At the committee's hearing on the Gold Coast a small convenience trader who had three small stores was absolutely critical of this legislation. He said he had been a lifetime member of the Labor Party and also a lifetime Labor voter and could not understand why a Labor government would bring in this big business supporting legislation, as it was going to absolutely destroy his business. As the members of the committee who were there on that particular day would know, it was a cry for help from a guy who, even though he was misguided—

**Ms Grace** interjected.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Ms Farmer): Order, Minister! The member is not taking your interjections, so please cease them.

**Mr STEVENS:** The owner of three convenience businesses at Parkwood, Arundel, who was at this committee meeting—some members were not at that particular meeting—told the committee how he would close his business and lose his staff and this is what he got for voting Labor all his life as a member of the Labor Party. It was a clear cry for help. I can chase down his name for any member who would like to talk to him personally about the matter.

We are not going to support this bill in any way, shape or form. It will destroy small businesses. It will have a major effect on jobs in Queensland. That will be the ultimate result of this misguided union-building legislation. Whilst the big operators in the state can afford to trade these extra hours,

they will just squeeze further advantage until one day there will be no convenience stores or IGAs or NightOwls or Spars to compete against them and you will see prices go up spectacularly. There is no way that we, as former business operators, can support these amendments for extended trading hours. I look forward to this bill getting the treatment that it deserves.