




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR IPSWICH

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PRIVATE MEMBER'S STATEMENT

Ipswich CBD, Post Office

 **Ms HOWARD** (Ipswich—ALP) (2.35 pm): Ipswich built its first post office in 1862, which was about the same time that the Queensland borders were finalised. In 1901 a new Ipswich Post Office was built with a tall clock tower next to the iconic old Town Hall. It became the ticking heart of Ipswich. In 1985 it survived a massive inferno that consumed a CBD block across the road, not to mention numerous floods. In many ways, the Ipswich Post Office with its iconic clock tower is a symbol of the resilience that defines the city.

Therefore, can members imagine the outcry when late last month Australia Post announced that it was closing the CBD post office? Never has there been a worse time for Australia Post to abandon the heart of Ipswich. Australia Post declared that declining patronage forced its hand. That is what happens when you put profits ahead of people; when essential government services become corporatised or, worse, outsourced or even sold off.

I wrote to Australia Post's CEO and Managing Director, Christine Holgate, to outline how premature the decision was. The Ipswich CBD is on the cusp of major change with the Nicholas Street Mall undergoing massive redevelopment. That change is essential following years of mismanagement and neglect by the former Ipswich City Council. The Ipswich CBD risked becoming a ghost town as businesses closed, but not all of them. Some made a deliberate decision to dig deep and remain operating, demonstrating not only determination but also a significant commitment to and belief in the city.

I am talking about family businesses such as Bob Slater's Terry White Chemmart. Bob has been a fixture in the mall for about 40 years. When the demolition of the old Ipswich City Square buildings took place, Bob and his son, Todd, opened up further down the mall, closer to Brisbane Street. They declared their loyalty to the CBD and said that their decision was not just a business investment but also a desire to be a part of the future of the Ipswich CBD. New businesses have moved into the CBD, including Banshees Bar and Artspace, which is opposite the old post office site. Last year, in the middle of the mall's demolition, Ken Weaver and Nina Florence established the business and are determined to remain part of the future of the city's heart. They are local people making big investments and showing leadership and courage in the face of adversity.

I reminded Australia Post that they were not the only business in the CBD doing it tough. To be honest, they are partly to blame. Once upon a time, the post office was located right under the clock tower, with its doors opening onto Brisbane Street. Following the sale of the building and some extensions, the post office moved inside the new development and off the main street. The front part of the building, which was the traditional location of the post office, remains vacant.

I am optimistic that economic conditions in the Ipswich CBD will improve once the mall's redevelopment is completed. I can confirm that the redevelopment of the CBD precinct is making considerable progress under the Ipswich City Council's interim administrator. Once the works are completed, economic conditions will recover, people will come back and new businesses will flourish.