




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR MOUNT OMMANEY

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HOLIDAYS AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Ms PUGH** (Mount Ommaney—ALP) (12.09 pm): My father has been a chef my entire life. I come from a proud hospitality family and that means that I do not remember us sharing a whole Christmas Day together until my early 20s. Every year my dad would hustle us kids out of bed so we could have an hour together as a family to open gifts and to eat a quick breakfast before he went to cook Christmas lunch for hundreds of other people. He would get home late in the afternoon absolutely exhausted and grumpy having missed out on the day's festivities. I know that this scenario will play out for thousands of other families right across Australia in just under a month. There is no getting around it: not having a Christmas as a family sucks. When Dad became the sole owner of Restaurant Two after many years—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Steward): Order! Pause the clock. I think you have used unparliamentary language. I ask you to withdraw.

Ms PUGH: I withdraw. When Dad became the sole owner of Restaurant Two after many years of serving Christmas Day lunch, we made the decision to close on Christmas Day. This was despite strong demand from customers. We decided as a business that this was a special day for our staff to spend with their family and we wanted them to have that day. Some of our staff were from overseas and we often ended up hosting them at our house each year. Instead, we opened on Christmas Eve for bookings only with a special set menu at a fixed price. This was mainly to prevent wastage as we were closed for the ensuing days, but it meant we could better control our costs for the evening. It ended up being one of our busiest nights. I know if we were still open and our staff were happy to work, we would stay open and we would factor that wage increase into our prices.

Diners love coming out on Christmas Eve to celebrate with family and entertain visiting loved ones. Of course, I saw a few Christmas Eve proposals in my time. For most restaurants, adding a surcharge is not a large problem. We certainly know from the roaring trade that many holiday venues do over the Easter long weekend that most diners are happy to pay them. These times together are so precious. They come up a few times a year and we need to ensure that those times are protected and preserved for people to celebrate.

For many families, particularly religious ones, Christmas Eve is just as special as Christmas Day. I know that this year my local church services will be very busy with families wishing to share a quiet moment. I can confirm that last year's Christmas Eve service at the Church of the 12 Apostles, which I attended with my family, was packed to the gunwales. Families like mine, with two single parents, also join with family on Christmas Eve to celebrate. My children and I will join their dad's extended family on Christmas Eve before he joins our family celebration on Christmas Day. This enables both sets of families to see the children as well as allowing them to see all of their cousins. As families change shape and size, Christmas Eve has taken on extra importance for families like ours who have children with two households.

If members are not moved by tales of working-class families, then let's look to the royals. I understand that the British royal family like to gather on Christmas Eve to exchange gifts and celebrate with festive cheer. I am led to believe by the cover of *New Idea* that the royals are just like us! If Kate Middleton does not want to work on Christmas Eve then why should our hospitality workers?

Each year I run my Mount Ommaney Small Business Awards in my electorate, aimed at promoting the hardworking small businesses in my electorate. This year over 200 small businesses attended the awards, and I also hosted numerous launch events while this issue was being canvassed in the community. I can say that not a single member of my chamber of commerce or my larger business community raised this with me as an issue of concern. Mount Ommaney locals know I am passionate about advocating for small business. I want to ensure that they are competing on a level playing field. Most small business owners I know—and having been a small business manager I know this—value the contribution of their employees. If they have a good employee, they do not complain about paying them penalty rates; they wish that they could pay them more. If there is one thing I know from working in small business and running my Mount Ommaney Small Business Awards, it is that our local small businesses are absolutely packed with amazing superstar staff who go above and beyond every day of the year—not just at Christmas time—to do an amazing job for their employers.

For years there has been an attempt by those opposite to create an adversarial narrative that hardworking staff are trying to bleed their employers dry. Let's be clear: these staff generally work for little more than minimum wage, and they need and deserve every extra penny, especially at an expensive time of year like Christmas. Let's not be scrooges; let's give these hardworking employees an early Christmas present.