




Speech By
Julianne Gilbert

MEMBER FOR MACKAY

Record of Proceedings, 27 November 2019

HOLIDAYS AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mrs GILBERT** (Mackay—ALP) (2.51 pm): I rise to speak in favour of the bill. This bill is about people and families. Christmas is only weeks away and my family has already started to prepare for Christmas Day. My family is like many other families in Queensland. For us, Christmas celebrations begin on Christmas Eve. We all attend church vigil services. It has long been a tradition for a couple of generations for all the children to have ice cream spider drinks when they get home as a Christmas celebration. Unfortunately, some of my family are shiftworkers and are required to work on Christmas Day. They do not enjoy not being able to spend time with the rest of the family—and I come from a big family; there are heaps of us—but they always get that bonus whereby they are recognised for the work they do in the form of penalty rates.

Christmas is important not just for my family but for our society. It is a time to celebrate and to embrace our communities. Declaring a public holiday will recognise the personal, social and religious and cultural significance of the Christmas celebrations that commence on Christmas Eve and so, too, it will recognise the importance of that evening to spend time with family and friends and to prepare for Christmas Day.

When this bill was introduced into the parliament, there was a mix of reactions from my community. The Mackay Chamber of Commerce was against this bill. They said it will force businesses to close and people will lose income. I gave them a commitment that I would listen to the community to see what the electorate of Mackay was saying. On my Facebook page there was a very positive reaction to this six-hour public holiday on Christmas Eve. In our local paper the *Daily Mercury* the majority of SMSs were in favour of the half-day public holiday. Once upon a time the Christmas Eve mass was at midnight.

Mr Power: Earlier and earlier.

Mrs GILBERT: Now more frequently it is held earlier on the evening of Christmas Eve; the mass I go to starts at six o'clock. Families want time together to prepare for the Christmas Day celebrations whether in a religious way or just to get ready for the arrival of Santa. Seriously, it is a time for families.

There has been wide consultation, and not just with my community and the people I have met with and spoken to. We have heard from unions, employer groups and churches. The outcome of the consultation—the weight of it—has been in favour of this public holiday. We are living in a time when change is so swift and people are experiencing increases in stress and mental health issues so we need time and to put people in front of profits. We need time to stop. We need time to celebrate. We need to get in touch with what is important. Sometimes people are more important than profits. Our communities are important and we need to be with those we love.

My community in general has said to me that they do not want to spend Christmas Eve out there shopping; they have been to our local shopping centres that open to midnight for a week before Christmas. They have done all the shopping they want to do. They want an opportunity to stop, relax and be with the people they love. Those who need to work on Christmas Eve deserve to be rewarded. I commend the bill to the House.