




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR BONNEY

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HOLIDAYS AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr O'CONNOR** (Bonney—LNP) (2.21 pm): I rise to make a contribution in opposition to the amendments put forward in the Holidays and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2019, other than of course the last-minute minor amendments we have seen to ID-scanning laws. To make 24 December a public holiday from 6 pm to midnight is a costly way to welcome Christmas for a tourist city like the Gold Coast. Small businesses are already having a hard enough time under this government, particularly hospitality businesses. Although this only impacts a few hours on one day of the year, it is another hit they cannot afford. As several of my colleagues have quoted, the Australian Retailers Association summed up the proposed changes well in saying that the 'case for this proposal is flawed at best and baseless at worst'.

The Gold Coast runs on tourism, and that is especially so during holiday periods. The tourism industry employs one in six Gold Coasters and generates around 14 per cent of our gross regional product. We are Australia's fourth most visited destination. Visitors to our city eat out at cafes and restaurants, they go to bars and they shop. These amendments will hurt tourism on the Gold Coast. We need these venues to stay open so tourists can enjoy what we have to offer over the Christmas period. The last thing the Gold Coast needs is to have businesses close during one of the busiest times of the year. We do not want people trying to turn up to venues that simply cannot afford to open. It will be like the ghost town we saw during the Commonwealth Games all over again but thankfully just for one night and not for weeks.

Many businesses would most likely choose to close instead of incurring the increased costs that come with opening on a public holiday. They will eschew opening and putting on staff which will mean fewer shifts for some of our lowest paid workers, completely going against what the government wants to achieve. I worked for many years in the hospitality industry and saw firsthand how public holidays often mean fewer staff working. If the venue even opens, it becomes a case of a small number of casual staff being put on, or the managers or other staff who are full-time or part-time who may not have to be paid the same rates working in their place.

Many of these businesses run on small margins and they cannot afford any extra expense like this. Christmas Eve is a time for families, but the result of this change for some will mean that many small business people will have to work because they cannot afford to pay wages for their staff. This already happens on other public holidays and even on Sundays for many of my local businesses. These people are not the top end of town. Particularly in a place like the Gold Coast, these small business owners are the very definition of everyday Queenslanders.

The Queensland Hotels Association found that 100 per cent of their polled members said that if the cost of opening became more expensive they would close or reduce the shifts of their staff. Clubs Queensland is expecting many of their member clubs to close too, with the added costs likely to be around \$750,000. That is lost shifts for people in my area.

It is interesting to see that at the same time these businesses are being hit there might finally be some small relief in the ID scanner space for venues that have to use them. Changes in this space are long overdue, and frankly it is too little too late. Broadly with these changes there is a large cost to

implementing them as well and it will have to overwhelmingly fall onto the private sector. Modelling provided by the government predicts that the cost of wages under these amendments will be between \$41.3 million and \$136.9 million. This is split roughly into a cost to the public sector of between \$9.5 million and \$21.1 million and between \$31.9 million and \$115.8 million for private enterprises. These are pretty big differences in potential costs to businesses. It shows that this amendment has been poorly planned and its impact is not fully understood.

Businesses are already facing sluggish and costly conditions. The Pulse Survey undertaken by the Chamber of Commerce & Industry Queensland has reported that the general business vibe in Queensland is at its lowest levels on record and continues to weaken. I want to see businesses grow and prosper. I have some excellent restaurants, cafes and clubs in my area and they work hard to survive—places like the Grand Hotel; the Arundel Tavern; the 'Parky Tav'; Tonic and Ground N Sound at Chirn Park; Lambar Pizza, which I visit far too often; and one of the oldest and best fish and chip shops on the coast in Harley's at Labrador. They should not have to work any harder to make ends meet. This will be an unwelcome Christmas surprise for them.