




Speech By
Barry O'Rourke

MEMBER FOR ROCKHAMPTON

Record of Proceedings, 15 July 2020

MOTION

Coronavirus, JobKeeper

 **Mr O'ROURKE** (Rockhampton—ALP) (4.28 pm): I rise to speak in support of this motion. Just last week I visited several businesses that had received the Queensland government small business COVID-19 grants. I was talking to Simone, one of the local shop owners. She has five staff. She was talking about how things are going pretty well at the moment but she was worried that there is a bit of a bubble. She needs JobKeeper to continue because she was uncertain about her future. She has five staff, including a few school aged kids, and plays a really important role.

I also caught up with Dave. He is one of our local publicans and a really good bloke. He was saying that businesses really need that support into the future to look after their staff until they get back on to their feet. He is concerned that if JobKeeper stops in September, particularly in the hotel and hospitality industry, they will no longer be able to maintain current staffing. He is concerned about the flow-on impact of that, be it reducing the number of hours for existing staff or laying off staff. The issues compound from there—not as much money in town, other businesses slowing down, unemployment rising—and there is a continual flow-on impact across the community.

Dave also spoke about some of the practical issues. Going into the Christmas season, local businesses will not be able to afford to have Christmas parties and the like. Things like that have an ongoing impact. The hospitality industry—pubs, clubs et cetera—does more than just provide drinks and service; it provides a meeting place to bring the fabric of our community together. It is so important that we support all of these businesses and the people involved.

I really encourage both state and federal LNP members to talk to people on the ground who really are hurting and to listen to what they have to say. They really want our communities to continue, but they are doing it tough. The federal government made a budget error of some \$60 billion. It was already earmarked. Now is the opportunity. I call on the federal government to provide certainty for our businesses and extend the JobKeeper program beyond the current six months instead of finishing it on 27 September. We need to look after our small businesses, workers et cetera. This is just so important to keep our economies going. I commend the motion to the House.