




Speech By
James Lister

MEMBER FOR SOUTHERN DOWNS

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ADJOURNMENT

Southern Downs Electorate, Border Business Zone Hardship Grants

 **Mr LISTER** (Southern Downs—LNP) (7.19 pm): I rise to speak about the border closure and its impact on my electorate of Southern Downs. I note with thanks that the government has introduced the Border Business Zone Hardship Grants for businesses in border communities that are impacted directly by the border closure. I was surprised and delighted to receive a phone call from the minister for small business and training to ask my views on things around the border. That was the first time I have had any high-level contact from the government regarding the border closures. I thank the government for the program.

Alas, the grants apply in only two small locations, Goondiwindi and Wallangarra. I should not say 'small' because, when we look at the map, the support grants for Goondiwindi cover a vast area of tumbleweeds. However, the towns of Killarney, Warwick, Texas and Stanthorpe, which have very significant business dealings across the border, have been completely left out. Businesses in those towns, which are impacted equally to those in Goondiwindi, Mungindi or Coolangatta, have missed out entirely. I have written to the minister to highlight this omission. I ask the government to, as soon as may be, amend the map to include all of the communities in my electorate of Southern Downs that are located along the New South Wales border.

Ms Leahy interjected.

Mr LISTER: I take the interjection from the member for Warrego. Beyond Mungindi there are other towns. To give an example, Ray and Connie Taylor run Taylor Family Produce, which is a leafy green vegetable, tomato and capsicum producer. They had fields prepared just over the border from Stanthorpe in Liston. They had invested over \$300,000 in preparing those fields. The border was shut—bang! They had to abandon that work and rapidly find another field that had to be prepared to produce tomatoes and capsicums to fulfil the contracts that they are obliged to meet. \$300,000 is a very significant amount of money for any private individual or small business to wear while people like us—politicians—who are paid from the public purse suffer no financial disadvantage from having the border closed.

While this is a great initiative, we really need to make sure that the businesses that have been impacted are not constrained by a mere line on a map that means that they are not entitled to a \$5,000 grant. In Texas, the Spa supermarket, the FoodWorks supermarket, the bakery and the newsagent are affected by the fact that the border is shut as there is far less business coming from New South Wales. Agronomists or contractors who have work on the other side of the border have been cut off from their markets. They are all suffering very badly. If the intent is that such businesses should be eligible for the \$5,000 grant, I ask the government and minister to amend the map to include the towns of Killarney, Warwick, Texas and Stanthorpe.