




Speech By
Laura Gerber

MEMBER FOR CURRUMBIN

Record of Proceedings, 14 October 2021

ADJOURNMENT

Coronavirus, Small Business

 **Mrs GERBER** (Currumbin—LNP) (6.06 pm): Christmas for small and family businesses is planned in October—not November, not December. That is why the LNP is desperately calling on the Premier to release the road map out of the pandemic now. If the Premier will not release the plan and there is the uncertainty of lockdowns, restrictions and border closures continuing to hang like a dark cloud over the head of my community with no hope in sight, I call on the small business minister to step up and take action to ensure no more small and family businesses fall through the cracks. I call on the small business minister to establish a hardship panel to assess on a case-by-case basis businesses that are falling through the cracks and suffering genuine financial hardship as a result of government restrictions.

After our pleas, the minister extended the business support package and talked in this very chamber about meeting with border businesses. I believe the small business minister is well-intentioned in trying to help my community. She visited Coolangatta—unlike the Premier—and genuinely spoke with businesses but, unfortunately despite the minister's best intentions, the businesses she spoke to are still not eligible for the grants that she has extended. One of those businesses, Antonietta, wrote to me and said—

I am still not eligible. Once again, I have fallen through the cracks. Annastacia Palaszczuk has a lot to answer for ... While she sits comfortably away hiding in her office, businesses in Cooly suffer.

Antonietta is not alone. Emma owns two local cafes in Kirra: Kirramisu and Haig Street Cafe. When the Premier visited Coolangatta for a photo op, she had her breakfast at Haig Street Cafe. The Premier did not seek out cafe owner Emma to talk with her while there. When the exposure sites were listed in Kirra, Queensland Health incorrectly listed Kirramisu as a location when it was meant to be Haig Street Cafe—on the same day the Premier visited.

As a precaution and to keep the community safe, even though Emma had no contact from Queensland Health and had not been asked to do so, Emma made the extremely tough and self-sacrificing decision to close her business. She closed it to protect the community. As a result of that, 14 of her staff were in home quarantine and she could not reopen. She was told that she is not eligible for any grants. Antonietta and Emma have been overlooked. Emma has told me that she was told she is not eligible for support because she closed by choice, but she closed because 14 of her staff were in home quarantine.

The government restrictions have affected so many businesses and their staff. Even though the minister has announced some support measures, there are still so many businesses in severe financial strain falling through the cracks. That is why I am calling on the small business minister to establish a hardship panel to assess these businesses on a case-by-case basis, so they do not fall through the cracks.

(Time expired)