




Speech By
Ann Leahy

MEMBER FOR WARREGO

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TRADING (ALLOWABLE HOURS) AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Ms LEAHY** (Warrego—LNP) (12.54 pm): I rise to contribute to the debate on the Trading (Allowable Hours) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. Five years ago, this House was presented with a bill to extend the non-exempt shop trading hours and provisions to standardise trading hours for Sundays and public holidays across Queensland. That five-year extension is now ending and we are presented by the government with this legislation which proposes to extend the arrangements for just 12 months.

The bill's primary objective is to implement the recommendations of the Queensland parliament's Education, Employment and Training Committee following its recent inquiry into the operation of the Trading (Allowable Hours) Act 1990. The committee did not identify the need or demand for substantial deregulation of trading hours arrangements following the major amendments already made in 2017. I do not see that there are changes being driven by overwhelming consumer sentiment either.

I commend the Deputy Leader of the Opposition for the LNP's amendments that seek to improve this legislation. These amendments would help businesses deal with the pressures of the COVID-19 pandemic and the natural disasters. Keep in mind that some Queensland communities have experienced five floods this year. These amendments seek to extend the moratorium from one year to five years. These amendments are needed. In regional Queensland, we have not seen a return to normal market conditions across the regions. In some cases, family and small businesses have had to deal with drought, the pandemic with border closures and successive natural disasters.

I specifically reference the FoodWorks at Dirranbandi which has had to deal with exactly that—drought, border closures and their fifth flood this year. They have not had the tourists coming through because they simply have not been able to get there because the roads have been closed. One road in particular has been closed for 60 days. I urge government members to support the LNP's amendments to help these family and small businesses, like the Dirranbandi FoodWorks and others in my electorate. Frank Spano, the IGA QNN retail chairman, said in his submission—

The industry has faced increasing transport costs—
and we see that with the cost of fuel—

and delays, a labour shortage (especially skilled workers), and inflationary pressure on the cost of goods and services which have all had a negative effect on our members' businesses.

I will add to that list the lack of child care in regional areas. Many of the people who work in these family and small businesses are women, and they are the ones who often cannot work because they have no access to affordable child care or there is simply no child care at all in the community they live in.

The impacts of this legislation will be felt by many family and small businesses in my electorate, like the IGA in Roma. That is a great new store and I congratulate the IGA on this particular store. They have excellent customer service from Cookie and her team. There are IGAs in Charleville, St George,

Chinchilla; there is a SPAR supermarket in Injune; and there are FoodWorks stores in Mitchell, Dirranbandi, Roma, Miles, Tara, Thargomindah, Quilpie, Dalby and St George—they are all critical small businesses in these communities.

Amanda Richards from the FoodWorks in Roma wrote to me about the impact on their business of this legislation. She said—

Change to trading hours may result in the closure of our store as we will lose valuable trading hours that keeps our business sustainable.

More net jobs will be lost—the independent retail sector employ more locals than major retailers. Further deregulation of trading hours will result in net loss of jobs

She continued—

Woolworths and Coles will not employ more people—already they're reducing their work force through self-scanning and use of technologies.


The trading hours change is not an antidote for the tourism sector. People do not go on holidays to shop in supermarkets; the market is already adequately serviced. This is an attack by large retailers on small business and the result is fewer jobs. There have been small business closures. Over 31 independent food and grocery stores have closed since 2017. Further deregulation of trading hours will result in more store closures.

Each of the Drakes, FoodWorks, Friendly Grocers, IGAs and SPAR stores across Queensland are small businesses independently owned and operated as sole traders or family-run businesses. The FoodWorks in St George has been owned by the Webster family for more than 50 years; it is a hardworking, family-run small business. The Mills IGA in Cunnamulla has been operating in Cunnamulla for more than 70 years. I commend Eddie Mills and Stephanie and their family for the great service they have given to the Cunnamulla community. I believe that you, Mr Deputy Speaker Hart, may have been there visiting with me as well. Interestingly, the IGA in Cunnamulla had toilet paper during the pandemic when many others did not. Frank Spano, the retail chairman of IGA, said that these businesses—

... make a significant contribution to the communities in which they operate. They provide considerable support to their local communities, through local fundraising initiatives that support schools, kindergartens, hospitals, clubs and so on.

...

Most importantly they are major employers within their communities. Many of their employees include working mothers ... whose income is essential—

 **Ms LEAHY** (Warrego—LNP) (4.03 pm), continuing: The IGAs in Roma, Charleville, St George, Chinchilla and Cunnamulla, the SPAR supermarket in Injune and the FoodWorks in Mitchell, Dirranbandi, Roma, Miles, Tara, Thargomindah, Quilpie, Dalby and St George are all critical small businesses in these communities. To quote Frank Spano, the IGA retail chairman who submitted to this legislation—

These businesses make a significant contribution to the communities in which they operate. They provide considerable support to their local communities through local fundraising initiatives that support schools, kindergartens, hospitals, clubs and so on. Most importantly, they are major employers within their communities.

We have not seen in regional Queensland a return to normal market conditions across the regions. In some cases these family and small businesses have had to deal with drought, the impacts of the pandemic, particularly through border closures, and repeated natural disaster events—not to mention the staff shortages. They advertise positions but no-one applies. There is a very significant staff shortage in regional Queensland.

Removing the moratorium in August 2022 will not support family and small businesses. In fact, it will remove their competitive advantage. The Labor government legislation is intent on removing the moratorium and this support for small businesses. Currently the moratorium provides economic certainty for these businesses that in turn, make great contributions to their local communities through employment opportunities and support of suppliers and community groups.

The LNP amendments—I commend the Deputy Leader of the Opposition for these amendments—seek to extend the moratorium for five years. This will extend support to family and small businesses. Many of the small business employees include working mothers, women and young people whose income is essential to the economic wellbeing of themselves and their families. This legislation is not evidence based. There is no overwhelming consumer outpouring of community sentiment requesting a change.

I am concerned by recommendation 1, whereby the QIRC will be able to declare special event applications. It is all very well to have trade during special events; it is all very well for the QIRC to approve a special event. However, business cannot trade unless they have staff. Given the staff and skills shortages currently being experienced in regional areas, they will struggle to find staff during special events. The staff simply are not there for them to open and trade during those particular events. I will be interested to see whether this particular recommendation makes any difference at all. Family and small businesses deserve better from this Labor government than this ideological legislation, and Queenslanders deserve better. I call on the members opposite to support the LNP amendments. They are a significant improvement to this legislation and will support the family and small businesses in regional areas.