



Speech By  
**Ann Leahy**


**MEMBER FOR WARREGO**

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Record of Proceedings, 1 September 2022

**EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING COMMITTEE**

**Report, Motion to Take Note**

 **Ms LEAHY** (Warrego—LNP) (3.26 pm): I rise to contribute to the debate on the Education, Employment and Training Committee's inquiry into the operation of the Trading (Allowable Hours) Act 1990. The inquiry was held to review the amended trading hours arrangements for Queensland. The act required the minister to undertake a review into trading hours before the end of the five-year moratorium period lapses. Given that we have already debated the legislation, it feels a little unusual to be coming back in here to debate the committee report. Under normal circumstances, the committee report would be debated and then we would proceed to the government's response and the legislation.

A small business owner from Roma who operates a FoodWorks wrote to me about this inquiry. I will highlight a couple of things that she said, as I believe her concerns echo what many family and small businesses across my electorate are thinking in relation to the changes that have come forward from the government. The letter states—

Further deregulation of trading hours ... will harm our business and small business in Queensland.

Any further liberalisation of trading hours should be voted against to protect small business—a major employer in this state.

The letter further states—

Change to trading hours will impact our suppliers and vendors—they too will be casualties (adding to unemployment and failed small businesses).

As that business owner pointed out, not only will they feel the impacts; job losses will be felt throughout the entire supply chain of family and small businesses. In my electorate, family and small businesses are the providers of many jobs.

I thank the Balonne Shire Council for collating a list of vacancies in the shire. There are three pages of vacant jobs. I do not have enough time to read them all so I will table that list for the benefit of the House.

*Tabled paper:* Document, undated, titled 'List to Table for Trading Hours' [1264](#).

I counted over 60 businesses that are seeking staff in the Balonne shire. Some of those have multiple vacant positions and some are employers seeking young people for apprenticeships and traineeships. To put that into context, there are about 4,300 residents in the Balonne Shire Council, which is only one council in my electorate. I have another six who all have a similar number of vacancies in their shires.

These family and small businesses are the powerhouse of local economies in electorates like my electorate of Warrego. They want more staff. They certainly do not want the goalposts moved on them by the state Labor government in relation to trading hours. Sadly, the Labor government has done this. The government did not support our amendments to the legislation. In about 12 months we will see changes to trading hours.

In the statement of reservation LNP members raised a very valid concern in relation to lifestyle impacts and the impact on the mental wellbeing of employees due to the lack of childcare services outside the typical working week. Concerns raised regarding the lack of suitable childcare availability on weekends appear to be quite valid, particularly for single-parent families. It is not just on weekends that there is a lack of child care and it affects not just single-parent families. The availability of child care in rural and regional areas is at a premium on all work days. There are many women who do not go to work because they simply cannot get child care—hairdressers, admin staff and professional people who simply cannot get access to affordable child care. Therefore, they cannot go to work in their local community. They do not have the option of going to the next suburb, because that might be 200 kilometres away and is simply not practical. Some mums have told me that they have put their children into child care in Oakey. They drive two hours a day to put their children into child care just so they can work in Dalby—so they can get back into the workforce and keep their skills. That is a huge impost on them.

With any change to trading hours there will be a greater demand on childcare services. There will be many families and employers who simply will not cope. It will become far too difficult for them and they will be lost in communities. They are valuable employees. Many employees are casuals. Many employee interest groups are concerned that these workers are vulnerable to the pressure on them to work additional hours. Quite frankly, regional Queenslanders deserve better from this state Labor government.