




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR MARYBOROUGH

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SMALL BUSINESS COMMISSIONER BILL

 **Mr SAUNDERS** (Maryborough—ALP) (12.27 pm): I have been in small business all my life. I was in business with my father and my family. I have just come to realise that the advice my father gave me was completely wrong, because he said, 'Leopards can't change their spots.' Now we see the LNP. They are changing. Suddenly they love the Small Business Commissioner, yet they sacked the Small Business Commissioner. Isn't it amazing that they have completely changed sides? They said, 'Great, we will fight. We are not happy with what the Palaszczuk government has done for small business.' Since the Palaszczuk government came to power, over 368,000 jobs have been created in this state. Over 200,000 have been created since 2020.

I refer to the recent floods. One of the first people to visit my electorate after the first flood was our small business minister, who met and talked with small business people, guiding them through the process of making sure that we could get them back up and open again and back on their feet. They have not forgotten that our small business minister was one of the first people through their door to help them, to talk to them and to work out how they could get their doors open. This is what a good Labor government does: we talk about small business. That side of the House always say that they are the champions for small business. Let us get in the Tardis and go back a little bit, because all the reform for small business has come from Labor governments.

I have been in small business all my life. I can remember when the Goss government came to power. It was the Goss government that brought in the retail tenancy act. It was the first government to make sure that small businesses were looked after when they had to deal with shopping centre landlords. I had to do this because I had shops in shopping centres. Small business owners were always at a disadvantage when they had to go to these multinationals to try to renegotiate a lease. We saw that reform through the Goss government. We saw more reforms from the Beattie and Bligh governments.

Then we had the Newman government. In small business every time the tills stopped turning over and the takings dropped it was when we had LNP governments. I survived the Borbidge-Sheldon government of 1995-96. Then we had 'Cyclone Newman'. I can tell members that he was not good for small business. Those on that side of the House forget about that. Every time they come to power federally or in this state they cut wages. What they do is cut the discretionary spending of the average person. They believe the multinationals are cheaper. They believe by cutting jobs and cutting wages they are helping small business people, but they are not. It is not hard to understand.

I support this bill because I believe the Small Business Commissioner is a must. I am glad that this legislation will ensure the Small Business Commissioner is in place permanently.

I had some papers dropped off to me at my office. I will refer to Des Houghton's column in the *Courier-Mail*, which, I will be honest, I never actually read.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SAUNDERS: The peanut gallery over there is getting a bit upset at the moment. We will give them some oxygen and let them vent and let their lungs have a bit of a go. Remember that Des is the promotions officer for the LNP. What we see in Des's column on a Saturday we see from this mob on Tuesday in parliament. One does not have to be Einstein to work out the connection. This is what Des wrote—and I am going to ask the mob over there who gave him this information—

Two dozen trains an hour will be required to meet demand on the cross-river railway for the 2032 Brisbane Olympics.

Those figures are contained in leaked Rollingstock Expansion Program documents.

Really! Everyone knew that. He continues—

They say 65 additional six-car trains will be needed “to meet transport demand for the 2032 Brisbane Olympic and Paralympic Games and to maintain service reliability at current service levels on the newly sectorised network.

“The trains procured ... will also ensure that Cross River Rail is able to realise its full potential of 24 trains per hour.”

This is where it gets interesting. He continues—

The state government has already announced a \$7.1bn project for the 65 new trains to be built at Torbanlea near Maryborough. It's another pander to the unions—

that is unusual coming from Des—

with the construction, testing and maintenance of the new trains to be conducted within Queensland by government decree—

That is new too—especially to them. Fancy building trains in Queensland! Can members imagine it! It is something that they cannot imagine.

Ms Grace: Why don't we bring them from India?

Mr SAUNDERS: Why don't we bring them from India? Why don't we bring them from China or anywhere else? Do not forget that Des is the publicity officer for the LNP. It gets better—

Taxpayers will suffer. I'm told the trains could have been built much cheaper overseas.

Now we know where those opposite stand. I say to them: come to see my small business people in the Maryborough electorate and tell them that you want to build trains overseas; tell them that the workers at the train factory will not be spending money in the small businesses in my community. We know where they stand.

We knew this before the 2020 election. I have said in this place before that the Thursday night before the 2020 election they showed us what they thought of small business in my area. They sneakily put their budget estimates out. There was no money for the Cross River Rail trains to be built in my electorate, but there was money for them to be built overseas. As I have often said, their candidate deflated like a balloon. He disappeared and was gone. He packed up his things and went. He knew after that that there was a lot of trouble coming their way.

That mob over there think that they are the doyens of small business—that they are the champions out there with their badges on. I know who the champions of small business are. It is always Labor governments. Labor governments make sure that workers have money in their pockets. They make sure that workers are looked after. They make sure that workers have a job. They make sure that workers have a full-time job and not a part-time job.

This federal government is absolutely disgraceful. I hope that tonight they work out that Queensland exists and that we are not cut off the map of Australia and gone. In the Wide Bay and Hinkler electorates we need both federal members to step up. We desperately need them to go to Scott Morrison and say, 'Give us money for our regions and for our small business people.' Why are my people who have been flooded being treated differently to those who have been flooded in New South Wales? Why are my small business operators being treated differently to the small business operators in New South Wales? Where are the voices of the federal LNP members for my city which has suffered flooding? People should see the look on residents' faces. The federal members and the federal government pander to New South Wales instead of Queensland.

The Small Business Commissioner is a must for this state because small businesses need help. I was in small business all my life. My family employed a lot of people. When a Labor government is in power they make sure that workers have a job and that workers have spending money. If their wages are cut and their jobs are threatened they put away their wallets and do not spend in small businesses. They go to the multinationals or do not spend. I saw it in the Borbidge-Sheldon years. They were tough years when they came to power, particularly after the good work of the Goss government.

We saw it with 'Cyclone Newman' too. He tore through the small business community. I saw people getting sacked. I saw what happened in my community. These people opposite say that they support small business. I never heard one voice stand up for small business between 2012 and 2015.

I was a small business operator. I was walking through my community talking to small business people. I never heard anything from anyone on that side. Did their front bench raise even a whisper about small business in their meetings? They never raised it in the community.

They have the hide to come in here and tell us that we do not know about small business. They tell us, 'You have never been in small business.' How many of those opposite have been in small business? I have been in small business all my life. It is only Labor that makes sure that small business is looked after. I commend this bill to the House.