




Speech By
Christopher Whiting

MEMBER FOR BANCROFT

Record of Proceedings, 17 March 2022

SMALL BUSINESS COMMISSIONER BILL

 **Mr WHITING** (Bancroft—ALP) (4.01 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Small Business Commissioner Bill. I emphasise to the House that the ALP will always be a champion of small business in this state because that is part of our values. Ordinary working Queenslanders have always wanted a decent job and have the dream of being their own boss one day. That is a key part of our aspirations as working Queenslanders—that is, having your own business and supporting small businesses. That is why supporting small business is one of the cores of our values and is very dear to the hearts of those on this side of the House.

The Small Business Commissioner package is another measure from the Palaszczuk government to support small business within Queensland. We have supported small business throughout the pandemic with our COVID-19 economic recovery plan which has small business at its heart, and that plan is underpinned by more than \$14.5 billion in recovery initiatives to support the COVID-19 response. That initiative is continuing to deliver jobs and deliver to communities throughout the state. There are three parts of this initiative which relate to the bill—\$1 billion worth of job support loans for 7,000 businesses, \$950 million in payroll and land relief tax and electricity bill relief, and \$320 million of joint funding for business support grants which went to 35,000 small businesses in Queensland.

The Palaszczuk government has committed more than \$2.5 billion in business support since March 2020. Let us contrast that to the LNP's record. The LNP had failed to deliver a dedicated small business policy during the election and its last policy was from May 2019—well before COVID hit. It was missing in action when it was really needed by small business. I remind the House once again that it was the LNP that abolished the Queensland Small Business Commissioner previously, so there was no dedicated advocacy role for Queensland small businesses at a time when they really needed it. We will restore that position cut by the Newman government.

The Small Business Commissioner will help small businesses as they take on those larger corporate landlords and absent landlords. As the member for Bancroft, I have seen some of the struggles with landlords—expensive rent or they are located in a shopping centre where they are not supplying enough security for their business, or sometimes they faced indifference from landlords during the 2020 pandemic.

I will give the House an example of my friend Adam Gibb from White Brick Brewing which was formerly in North Lakes. His landlord did not enter into any negotiations about the rent during the height of the 2020 pandemic. When the time came for them to wrap up, the landlord even refused to release their equipment from the rented premises. That is obviously a terrible blow to a business in that stage of its existence. I am happy to report that Adam is now setting up a new venture at Brendale, Hip Hops Brewers. Later this year I look forward to being a part of that. He is being backed by other small businesses which saw his product and believed in it and invested in him starting again in a new venture, and that is what small businesses do in our state. That is just one example of what some of our small businesses faced during the pandemic and why they need the Small Business Commissioner.

I also want to speak about how the Small Business Commissioner can help out franchisees in our communities. We are probably aware that people who buy franchises in order to open a small business do face a tough time. Some of them struggle, but not all of them. Some have very good arrangements, but there are a few who do struggle. Some of them pay enormous franchise fees that include marketing fees. Some of them have complained that they get very little marketing or advertising back for that. Some of them that I have spoken to say they do not feel they get the support that they were originally promised when they bought into that particular franchise arrangement. The Small Business Commissioner will be in a great position to help those small businesses that traditionally have felt that they do not have very many places to turn for assistance.

I would also love to see the Small Business Commissioner working with our local chambers of commerce, and I want to pay tribute to the re-emerging chambers of commerce in our area. I speak of the North Lakes Chamber of Commerce. It had a meeting this week at the North Lakes Hotel—another great local business—and I look forward to attending future meetings that are not held during sitting weeks. It has once again become a very active chamber. I also pay tribute to the Greater Caboolture Chamber of Commerce, which relaunched on 3 February and is off to a great start. Once again it is very active and advertising quite widely. It follows on from the great work that was done many years ago by Commerce Caboolture, and the member for Morayfield knows the great work that it has done previously.

I again reiterate that supporting small business by having things like the Small Business Commissioner is a key part of Labor values because we support ordinary working people in their endeavours to get a great job and in their endeavours to become their own boss, which is the aspiration of so many working people. That is why we hold small business so dear to our hearts on the Labor side. I want to pay tribute to some of the great small businesses in my area: Ng at Michel's at Deception Bay; Rob Brodie, who has a great tobacco business; Chris at Fort Specialty Coffee at North Lakes; Jaz N Gaz mobile coffee from Burpengary East; and IB Town Planning, which is not one that people often talk about but IB Town Planning is a great small business based in North Lakes. I could go on and on about these great small businesses because they are the heart of our economy and our community, but I look forward to them utilising in the best way they can the services of the Small Business Commissioner. I commend the bill to the House.