




Speech By
Deb Frecklington

MEMBER FOR NANANGO

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SMALL BUSINESS COMMISSIONER BILL

 **Mrs FRECKLINGTON** (Nanango—LNP) (4.08 pm): I rise to contribute to the debate on the Small Business Commissioner Bill 2021. From the outset I acknowledge that I support any initiative that supports small business in Queensland. Like so many on this side of the House, I came from a small business background before politics and continue to support those small businesses in my electorate because it is those small businesses that make the world go round. They employ our kids and other people and ensure that regional Queensland centres can continue to provide not only produce but also services.

I remember with fondness my time as the secretary of the Kingaroy Chamber of Commerce & Industry. I spent many a year doing that and advocating on behalf of small businesses in and around the South Burnett region. While talking about the Kingaroy Chamber of Commerce, I want to give a very special shout-out to the current president of the Kingaroy Chamber of Commerce, Mr Damien Martoo, who heads up the Martoo Review. Hopefully by saying that in the Queensland parliament I will feature, Damo, on the Martoo Review.

It is people like Damo and Jacqui Trace from Bill Hull, along with many other local Kingaroy businesses, who not only help support and encourage people in small business in and around our local towns but also have stepped into the mental health space. The reason why I want to talk about this whilst I am talking about the Small Business Commissioner bill is because over the last couple of years in so many of our regions across Queensland, people, in particular small business owners, have struggled through what has been an horrific couple of years because of the pandemic.

A government member: It would have been a lot worse if we'd opened the borders when you wanted.

Mrs Gerber: They did open the borders. What they didn't do is support small businesses.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I take the interjection. The Premier opened the borders.

A government member: On the health advice.

An opposition member: Will you publish the health advice?

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I will take the interjection. Exactly.

Honourable members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Martin): Order, members!

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: While I am talking about the serious issue of the mental health of people in our small businesses, the Labor members continue to perpetrate absolute falsehoods. Electorally they think it is doing them good. I was not going to say this, but I will say it now: local businesses have got together because of the sheer lack of support from the Palaszczuk government in the mental health space. My local Kingaroy Chamber of Commerce have had to set up Operation Smile to assist people

locally in the mental health space because the Palaszczuk government has forgotten about regional Queensland when it comes to mental health. I see your puzzled face, Mr Deputy Speaker. We have a brand new hospital and we do not have any more mental health beds.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Nanango, resume your seat. I will caution you on relevance and bring you back to the bill at hand.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I am more than happy to talk to the bill at hand. It is about small businesses. It is about establishing a Small Business Commissioner. My local businesses have set up a group called the Kingaroy Chamber of Commerce, and because of the lack of mental health services they have set up Operation Smile to assist local businesses when their staff take their lives.

A government member: Smile.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Again, the arrogance.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Nanango, if you could, as you said, come back to the bill. We would appreciate the debate continuing.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Many of my colleagues on this side of the House support small business. I give a shout-out to the shadow minister for small business, who is bringing in sensible amendments to this bill. The member for Buderim understands and supports local businesses. Every other member in this House has been allowed to talk about the great work of their chambers of commerce. I am going to talk about mine, because the Kingaroy Chamber of Commerce does everything possible to support local businesses. It is not just the Kingaroy Chamber of Commerce; it is also the Murgon Chamber of Commerce, the Kilcoy Chamber of Commerce, the Burnett Inland Economic Development Organisation—BIEDO—the Nanango Tourism and Development Association—NaTDA—and, of course, how could we forget the Yarraman Progress Association. All these organisations support local businesses. I have heard every member in this House stand up and talk about their local coffee shop or their local Thai shop. We should be supporting them. What I am doing is talking about the chambers of commerce who represent those local businesses. It is really important that we do that.

The amendments foreshadowed by the member for Buderim are sensible. This bill misses a huge opportunity to properly serve the interests of small businesses. Labor has given us a Small Business Commissioner with a very limited scope. It could have been so much more. I urge the House to support the amendments put forward by the shadow minister. The bill as it reads will only allow the Small Business Commissioner to deal with dispute resolution functions relating to residential tenancy disputes, which are very important, and mediation for commercial leasing and small business franchise disputes.

The bill has missed the opportunity to bring in further protections for other small businesses. It could have provided a mechanism for small business to deal with business-to-business disputes, such as payment disputes involving a small business and a larger business, but the bill does not go that far. The amendments by the shadow minister are sensible. I encourage the Labor members to listen to them and vote in support of the shadow minister.

There are flow-on effects to small businesses of cancelled events in our small regional towns. Disappointingly, the Goomeri Pumpkin Festival will not be held this year. It is important that I let the House know that the Goomeri Pumpkin Festival has been cancelled. Last year the member for Bancroft represented the government and came out to open it, but he did not do the pumpkin roll. I was going to challenge him this year. Unfortunately, he will not be able to come out to the Goomeri Pumpkin Festival, a wonderful festival. The cancellation of the festival has a flow-on effect to all of our local businesses, whether that is the Goomeri Bakery, the bookshop or the local pub. I would encourage everyone to head out to Goomeri. They have suffered through the last two floods. As a local member, it is difficult to pick a bakery in your local electorate. You should not do it. It is like judging a baby competition. But I will say the Goomeri Bakery, a French patisserie, is in my top bakeries in my electorate.

An opposition member: What about the Blackbutt Bakery? They will be upset.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I will take that interjection. The Blackbutt Bakery cuts all their own vegetables and makes everything. It is fantastic. Kilcoy curry pies are brilliant as well. There are so many. As it is important that we talk about the bill at hand, I say again that everyone in the House is supportive of small business. It is important that we continue to buy local, shop local and support local businesses, because the people who run small businesses make our communities tick.