



Speech By  
**Hon. Grace Grace**


**MEMBER FOR MCCONNEL**

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Record of Proceedings, 18 August 2022

**TRADING (ALLOWABLE HOURS) AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT  
BILL**

**Second Reading**

 **Hon. G GRACE** (McConnel—ALP) (Minister for Education, Minister for Industrial Relations and Minister for Racing) (4.35 pm), in reply: I thank the members of the House for their contributions to the debate. Obviously, I am a little disappointed, given all of the processes that we have been through. There has been the parliamentary inquiry to which submissions were made. Hearings were conducted by the committee through the parliamentary process, as you would know, Mr Deputy Speaker, as the deputy chair of that committee. The report was handed down. The recommendations were taken on board—recommendations that balanced all of the interests raised by stakeholders from throughout Queensland. I thank you all for a very thorough job and I acknowledge the chair and the deputy chair. Therefore, I am disappointed that this debate has come down to who supports small business more: is it us or is it them? What a pathetic argument and it has been raised time and time again in this House.

I remind those opposite of what small businesses were facing before Labor changed the trading hours arrangements in 2017. We had to drag the LNP kicking and screaming all the way because they were happy for things to continue as they were. We had the intestinal fortitude to really support trading hours reforms for business in this state. My goodness, hasn't that served the industry well in the past five years! It was extraordinary policy and those opposite had to be dragged along, kicking and screaming all the way.

With all due respect, the bill has been through the committee process, there was no dissenting report, and the committee made one recommendation: that the bill be passed. Now we have all of these contradictory statements. It is as if they want to throw the baby out with the bathwater in terms of all of the work that has been done because of some pathetic stance that 'we support business and those opposite do not.' It is so ridiculous. Other than that ridiculous rubbish statement, there is no substance at all to any of the recommendations or amendments put forward by those opposite. There is no substance whatsoever.

If anyone in this House thinks that I do not speak to the sector then they are sadly mistaken. I want to thank people such as Frank Spano, Terry Slaughter, Roz White and Luke McKenzie for inviting the member for Jordan, the now federal Speaker of the House of Representatives and member for Oxley, Milton Dick, and me to the IGA Expo on 17 July 2022. All of this was out in the open when we were at that expo. I can tell the House that it was amazing to be with them and see what was on offer. I want to declare something: I am an IGA shopper. I love the IGA in New Farm. It thrives, yet Coles is just the down the road and Woolies is at Gasworks Plaza. Because of their offering and the convenience, I am an IGA shopper and those people know that I am. Recently, Michael and I went to Sunshine Beach and I shopped at the IGA in Noosa Heads. There were lots of other supermarkets around—Coles was right next door—but that supermarket was thriving.

To somehow suggest that because there are other businesses around they are going to fold is disrespectful to the people who run those fine businesses. At the IGA Expo I saw the systematic work that goes into providing a great service, such as that provided by Roz White at Peregian and all of the others who run those businesses. It is disrespectful to those businesspeople to come in here and suggest that somehow this is going to send them to the wall. That is ridiculous.

It makes no sense, other than the pathetic line: 'We support small business.' For goodness sake! After what the committee heard, we cannot take this debate down to that simple, ridiculous line based on pure, base political expediency. It is pathetic.

**Mr Watts** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Lister): Order! Member for Toowoomba North!

**Ms GRACE:** Here we go. We have the committee signing off—

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Minister, would you resume your seat. Everyone, take a chill pill, please. I want to be able to hear the minister.

**Ms GRACE:** They do not like it when they know the truth.

**Mr Watts** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Member for Toowoomba North! I caution you. I will warn you next time.

**Ms GRACE:** They do like it when they know the truth. That is the reality of this. Get into the real world and stop playing politics. I know that the deputy chair of the committee has been rolled by the member for Kawana. The National Party has no say anymore on that side of the House. They have been absolutely rolled here.

**Mr Watts** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** The member for Toowoomba North is warned.

**Ms GRACE:** There was no talk about any changes. The National Party counts for zilch. Members of the KAP were on that committee and the same recommendations came down. I thank the member for his role. It is history repeating itself: ridiculous statements, ridiculous amendments and a nonsensical throwing out of an holistic package. I just cannot explain how disappointed I am with the debate that has continued versus the fine way in which the parliamentary committee conducted itself in this inquiry. Those opposite always want to trash the parliamentary process when they do not like the outcome—just like the member for Kawana did when his committee recommended that workers not have a barrier to common law. He rode roughshod over them and decided to put in the barrier, denying workers their common-law rights. There is form here by members opposite. I do feel for National Party members opposite, because under this arrangement they have absolutely no say.

Those opposite try to pick a fight about who supports small business more. That is all I heard. I did not hear anything substantial. We will vote down every single amendment because they are nonsensical. The recommendations are crafted as a set to provide a clear, consistent and stable trading hours framework for the retail sector for the years ahead. The member for Southern Downs must be thinking, 'Exactly what is going on here?' The member for Kawana is riding roughshod.

The committee looked at all of the submissions and made eminently sensible recommendations that took into account the views of all stakeholders. They arrived at an outcome that provided certainty and stability for trading hours. The committee found that the current hours served everyone really well. The way that it operated benefited individual businesses, consumers, workers and the retail sector as a whole over the past five years in spite of COVID-19. This government could not have planned it better even if it wanted to. They say that fact is stranger than fiction, and in this case it absolutely is.

I note with interest the final comment of LNP committee members in their statement of reservation when the report was tabled in January. It said—

The LNP Opposition members of the committee generally support the committee reports' recommendations which have resulted from a thorough and searching engagement with interest groups, retailers and public throughout the state. The recommendations seek not to deprive small family retail businesses and their staff of any existing trading hours protections, but rather to adjust and improve the workings of the Act.

That is the LNP opposition's statement of dissent in terms of the recommendations. Here we are today debating baseless, ridiculous amendments and changes not on fact or on information that the committee received but on a pathetic claim of: 'We look after small business. Those opposite look after big business.'

In the areas I visit around the state, a big business in a town often is the anchor that supports many small businesses around it. In fact, those small businesses would not thrive without that large business as the anchor. I can point to many examples. To trash everything that has been done by this committee with some ridiculous statement is nonsensical. I find it absolutely appalling that I have to sit here and listen to this.

What do the amendments propose? The first is that the moratorium be extended for a further five years. It would be 10 years in total since 2017. The moratorium was never designed to be extended in perpetuity. That was not the reason for it. The five-year moratorium was introduced to provide time for the reforms—and they were huge—in 2017. What a job that we on this side of the House did—incredible—to provide a breather for the sector which prior to 2017 had been subjected to an endless revolving door of expensive and time-consuming trading hours applications in the QIRC. These countless applications led to the hotchpotch that we had—100 different areas, 40 different pages et cetera. We cleaned that up. The bill today, based on the recommendation of the committee, refines this further to four clear trading hours areas that will remain fixed in legislation. That was not the case before.

The commission will have a role to play again under the new framework but in a far more targeted and clearly defined way than was the case in 2017. As I have explained to the House, the role of the QIRC will be to consider applications to move from one location to another, but we will not have this mishmash of hours all over the place. We will not be returning to the previous era. These safeguards are built into the act. If we remove those sections, what will happen after the five years? They will be back to where they were—complicated, ridiculous changes without realising the implications. This side of the House will not allow that to happen.

I owe it to those IGA people I respect and those people I meet regularly to protect them from those opposite. Why go on one submission when most of these, as we know, honestly and truly, have ambit claims in them? We know that. It comes from all sides. To go on one submission and to grab it is absolutely nonsensical. Those businesses deserve more respect, because they are darn good businesses. We should not unwind the five years of hard work. The committee in its five-year review found that stakeholders do not want to return to the previous trading hours arrangements set by the QIRC, yet amendments by those opposite will put them straight back there. To support our small and medium businesses, our best course is to follow the commonsense findings and recommendations of the committee and stakeholders who clearly stated the benefit of trading hours being fixed in the legislation and not the confusion of the LNP amendments. They would be horrified to know that is where we are going back to. I know these people very well—

**Mr Watts:** Very, very well?

**Ms GRACE:** Very, very well. I will take that interjection. The LNP amendments also seek to increase the definition thresholds et cetera. We have been through all of this. These people can employ up to 200 people. This is who is on the floor at any one time. They do not even understand how it works.

**Mr Bleijie:** They want 40 and they want 150.

**Ms GRACE:** Oh, 'they want'—yes, I know. You are talking about small business here. Aren't you the supporter of small business? The definition is usually 15 to 20 workers. That is what it is. Make up your mind which way you want to go. You stand up here saying, 'We're the party who supports small business.' For goodness sake, there has to be more to this argument than that!

**Mr MICKELBERG:** Family business.

**Ms GRACE:** And I love them—every single one of them—and they know it.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Lister): Order, members! Member for Buderim.

**Mr Mickelberg** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Member for Buderim, I will warn you next time.

**Ms GRACE:** More so than you, let me tell you that. We want genuine small business, not the ones those opposite propose to support with these amendments, which are absolutely ridiculous.

Finally, I wish to make a few comments in relation to Sunday trading in regional areas which I understand continues to be a topic of great interest. I note that the committee and you, Mr Deputy Speaker Lister, as deputy chair, found compelling arguments for and against the current restrictions. There are compelling arguments from all sides. There is no doubt about it. Those opposite, it would appear, want to preserve the status quo for a further five years, although, as I said before, it would again be a free-for-all after their extended five-year moratorium.

By contrast, our bill provides a process—after the extended moratorium finishes in August 2023—for these matters to be considered in an orderly, considered manner on application to the QIRC, as the independent umpire with expertise in dealing with these matters. This would then be six years of certainty that we have given these people. That is unheard of. We need to recognise that the views of stakeholders may differ in different communities.

Of the 21 regional towns with no Sunday trading, 15 of them have never had an application to introduce extended hours. Applications that were made for Sunday trading prior to these changes for Goondiwindi, Mount Isa, Kingaroy, Ayr, Mission Beach and Pittsworth were rejected by the QIRC—and

twice in the case of Mount Isa. The commission was actually doing its job. Obviously circumstances change. Communities change. Let the independent umpire have a look at this in a systematic way that protects the trading hours in legislation and in a fundamental way where everyone can put their views. That is not to say that they are going to get it, because they are not.

Just before the 2017 changes Stanthorpe was given extended Sunday trading hours. I spoke to some people in Stanthorpe when I was there knowing that this bill was coming before the House. Let me tell you that I shopped at the IGA and it was doing fantastically. Deputy Speaker, I would not doubt for a minute that you would have spoken to them as well. When I spoke to them they said they are doing extremely well. Family members I spoke to there said, 'I don't know how many times I've needed something on a Sunday, and just knowing the IGA is open saves so much hassle, and I know so many locals in the same boat.' 'Love shopping there.' 'Always lots of cars there on a Sunday.' They have not closed. They are doing extremely well. The local community is supporting them.

I spoke to one person and asked, 'How do you think the IGA is going?' They said, 'I think they are doing just fine.' This is one that had extended Sunday trading just before we made the amendment. To somehow suggest that these businesses are going to fold, that they are so flimsy, that they do not have a good business, is disrespectful to this industry. They run a fantastic business. They do extremely well. They offer a different product to their customers, to their communities and to their society.

These are a balanced set of changes to the trading hours legislation. I commend the committee on their work—including you, Mr Deputy Speaker Lister, as deputy chair and the member for Redlands as chair, and all the committee members who did a fantastic job. We are extending the moratorium for 12 months, giving an opportunity for adjustment in the new areas and for setting hours in place. That will be totally trashed by the incomprehensible, complicated, ridiculous amendments that the member for Kawana thinks he is going to get away with in this House. I will tell you that this side of the House will not allow him to do it. We will not have him trash the committee, which did an excellent job. There are processes.

Federally they have trashed the Westminster system with the former prime minister swearing himself into five ministries. Now we have the member for Kawana swearing himself in as ruler of all of the party over there. The poor Nationals have absolutely no say whatsoever.

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order, members! Pause the clock.

**Ms GRACE:** This builds on our landmark reforms.

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Ms GRACE:** I feel sorry for the Nationals—I do.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! Minister, you have the call.

**Ms GRACE:** Once were warriors but no more. There has been an extensive consultation process and a bipartisan committee process. It delivers stable and consistent trading hours. I commend the bill to the House.