




Speech By
Laura Gerber

MEMBER FOR CURRUMBIN

Record of Proceedings, 1 September 2022

EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING COMMITTEE

Report, Motion to Take Note

 **Mrs GERBER** (Currumbin—LNP) (3.32 pm): I wanted to speak on this topic during the last sitting week; however, the debate of the bill was guillotined and I was not allowed to. I will talk about the committee report even though now it cannot change the outcome because the bill has been passed. I supported the amendments moved by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition during the debate. During the debate, the LNP opposed the provisions implementing committee recommendations 2, 7 and 9. The reason we opposed those recommendations is that small and family business are our nation's biggest employer and generator of economic activity and growth, and they deserve a fair go when it comes to trading hours. In fact, evidence provided to the committee by the chairman of the Queensland IGA state board indicated that grocery sales by independent retailers result in greater employment of staff than identical grocery sales by the large retailers such as Woolworths, Coles and Aldi.

I am so proud to be able to support two local family owned IGAs in Currumbin—one in Currumbin Waters and one in Tugun. Both of these fantastic local businesses support our community not just by employing our young people but also by giving back. The Lions hold barbecues out the front of those IGAs, and the IGAs support many charity events right across the electorate. The vibrancy of our communities would be dulled if small independent retailers closed down because they no longer are viable.

It is my personal view that the government should act to level the playing field and protect small retailers from the market power of huge businesses such as Coles, Woolworths and Aldi. That does not mean that big businesses such as Coles and Woolworths are not important parts of our community. They are very important. Big supermarkets give locals a job. My sister works for Woolworths and has done so for many years. We rely on them for our day-to-day needs, but small and family businesses cannot compete with the market power that big retailers such as Coles and Woolworths wield.

Submissions on this to the committee were wideranging. In its submission the CCIQ said that the trading hours legislation, which has now been passed, is too complex. I agree. In my view, we need to see a focus on reducing the regulatory burden right across government, but the changes mean removed protections for small and family businesses. That is not really the answer to the problem. Given that red tape and regulatory barriers are one of the biggest and greatest concerns raised by Queensland small and family businesses, it is disappointing that from this government we saw a lack of focus on regulatory reform.

Of all of the submissions, perhaps the most significant for the LNP was the one from Master Grocers Australia. In fact, it shaped the amendments that the Deputy Leader of the Opposition moved in the House when the legislation was debated. It is really disappointing for our small and family businesses that the Labor government did not support our amendments. Master Grocers said that it believes that small and family grocery retailers will be forced to cease trading should committee recommendations 2, 7 and 9 be adopted, which of course we know they were. They further submitted

that the pause contained within section 59 is not extended for a meaningful period due to their inability to compete with the major national supermarket chains. Twelve months is far too short and far short of what Master Grocers Australia and the IGA representative bodies for northern New South Wales and Queensland asked for. That is why the LNP opposed the provisions that committee recommendations 2, 7 and 9 asked for, and that is why we sought to extend the moratorium extension from the proposed one year to five years.

The five-year moratorium is an acknowledgement that the trading conditions over the past 2½ years have been significantly disrupted due to COVID. It would have been a commonsense measure to remove uncertainty for small and family businesses at a time when they are just starting to get back on their feet. I do not think that was too much to ask for. It was really disappointing that the Labor government did not support our amendment in that respect. It tells me that sometimes the government just pays lip-service to supporting small and family businesses. The LNP will always stand up for our small and family businesses. That is why we moved those amendments. Labor did not support them.

The LNP—and only the LNP—is the party of small and family businesses. It is in our DNA. Many on this side, as has already been noted, run their own small and family businesses. That is why we on this side of the House understand small and family businesses. That is why we proposed those amendments. It was really disappointing that the Labor government did not support them. That tells us on this side of the House that the Labor government does not stand up for small and family businesses, because it would have been really easy for the government to accept those amendments and extend the moratorium to acknowledge the tough times that our small and family businesses have faced over COVID. However, the government did not do it. They did not do it out of petty politics. I will always stand up for my small and family businesses.