




Speech By  
**Linus Power**

**MEMBER FOR LOGAN**

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Record of Proceedings, 17 March 2022

### **SMALL BUSINESS COMMISSIONER BILL**

 **Mr POWER** (Logan—ALP) (12.40 pm): I want to recognise the hard work of the small businesses in Logan, especially during the COVID period that we have been through. They have been fantastic in their commitment to keeping the Logan community safe.

I have to question the member for Hill. The challenges that small business have faced have been significant, and the partnership they have had with government to help increase vaccination rates and also keep our community safe through sensible and well-explained rules has been fantastic and has made a difference. That is why we have had less closures than almost anywhere else in the world. That is why they have had their businesses run more actively. That is what this government is about. That is what this small business minister and indeed the Small Business Commissioner are about.

Faced with those difficulties, a small business commissioner would give accurate feedback about how we keep customers and how we avoid shutdowns. That is what this government has done for small business.

As we are moving forward, we are seeing cases increase in New South Wales, which is a concern. We are seeing winter coming, which is a concern. This government backs the community and backs small business by doing the right thing on COVID by continuing to keep them in work and keep them productive.

I want to particularly acknowledge one of the businesses in Logan—maybe they are not so small, but they came from a small base, the Logan Village pub where the McGuires took very seriously their responsibilities which was something that attracted customers. Because they were at the front door asking people to check in, people felt confident that they could go and have a meal there in the knowledge that they would be contacted if there was a serious infection in that pub. That is sensible, good policy and well-consulted within the industry, and it also makes consumers confident to go out and enjoy those facilities and to keep business going. That is what this government is about, member for Hill, when it comes to COVID; encouraging and supporting small businesses.

I want to record a few small businesses. It is fantastic to see the Minister for Education here because she enjoyed an iced coffee at Sorbello's Gloria Jean's at the Greenbank shops. After the speech I said, 'Let's get out and support small business,' and the minister immediately took that opportunity.

I want to speak about the chemists and the doctors who serve our community. They are often small businesses and often family-run businesses. I want to speak about the farms. I spoke about the farms which have been affected by floods, but there are all sorts of dynamic and creative farmers within the Logan area who often do small intensive horticulture and they are often family-run businesses. They are going to have issues where they will need a small business commissioner to support them.

I want to recognise Olley's Orange Country Market which is an iconic business, a grocery store in North Maclean. I encourage everyone to get down there. They compete directly against very large businesses which have huge advantages. However, they have the advantage of being a family-run

business that is nimble, can get to the markets and get great produce. They are a business which is really supported by the local community and they very much support local workers. I want to recognise Chyerl Pridham with the Logan Country Chamber of Commerce. They are people who are active in the community. They see small business as not just about taking money from the community, but being a partner with the community in giving back. For instance, Chyerl was out there volunteering herself, setting up a flood relief station in Logan Village and she did that off her own bat. That is the type of small business we want to see which grow, develop and are encouraged by our community.

I want to recognise Park Ridge Produce and the other produce businesses. When people hear 'the member for Logan', they think of central Logan, but I am part of a dynamic area right on the periphery of the city and those produces are really important.

I want to recognise the bakery in Logan Village: of course, the famous Country and Weston—both types of music. The Country and Weston Bakery and Cafe in North Maclean is iconic for the local area and again a great local employer.

We on this side of the House recognise that these small businesses have a power imbalance often with big business who control the suppliers they have and the real estate they are in. We are the only party that actually recognises that imbalance and wants to actively address that. We see the LNP so often talk and support big business. They are there for the big businesses that are the monopolies or the duopolies that actually make life harder for the small businesses. We see that small businesses struggle when large corporations drive down prices, but especially when they drive down labour costs.

We see the LNP, especially federally, attack our trade unions who are trying to increase the quality of work. So many small businesses, just like other workers, are making their profits from their hard work—their labour. Although they are structured as a small business, they are in common cause with our union movement to make sure that our workplaces have quality work, safe work, fair work, as well as well-remunerated work; whereas the LNP line up against small business workers in small businesses and they line up against workers in general where they attack at every opportunity. They undermine wages and conditions, and those wages and conditions ultimately filter down to the small business person who is also making their living through their hard work and their labour.

That is why this side is the party of workers, the party of workers who are employed under wages, but also the small business worker, because so much of what they get for their families is from their hard work and labour.

Big business has the power over leases. It is often the very large, major corporations that own the underlying leases which are a big input and cost to small business. That is why we need to see that there is a fair process.

Under COVID, we could have seen so many businesses destroyed. That is why I think it was useful in the national cabinet process where we saw premiers from Victoria, even New South Wales and South Australia say, 'Look, there is this power imbalance. We need to have situations that actually address that because we do not want to see small businesses driven out of business, even though they are successful and hardworking when there is a temporary blip.' That is why I think the role of the Small Business Commissioner is so important. We saw it play out under coronavirus, but it does not mean that the problem goes away.

We know big business can often use disputes with small business as a tool to get greater profits and to also stifle competition. We do not want to see that because we are on the side of small business, not on the side of big business, like that lot opposite.

We want to see that disputes are fairly and easily settled and the way to do that is through mediation and dispute resolution. That is the way we can see that small businesses have their voice and are not dominated and that the large businesses, the LNP mates, are not actually using those disputes and the law courts to help stifle their competition.

I want to speak briefly about red tape. The last government wanted to take away red tape or regulation by the pound. They boasted about it. They actually weighed and measured how to do it. I want to talk about one small business where the regulation that governed some of the serious things that they did that had some waste implications and other implications was completely removed. Naturally enough, the local council and the community was asking, 'What regulates them?' The public servants had to look around for other regulation that was less well-suited to that small business.

I want to see a small business commissioner who is looking at regulation, reflecting the views of small business, but not doing it in the slipshod, dangerous and frankly damaging way that happened under the last LNP government where they did not get regulation right in order to protect the community, they did not get regulation right in order to see that one person who was willing to exploit and to damage the environment or to hurt their workers would get an advantage in the marketplace; instead, you want regulation that makes for a fair and good playing field, and gets the conditions right.

That is the why the Small Business Commissioner will be in touch with small business. Ultimately, that lack of regulation damaged that business because the new regulations—the only ones they could fit them into—were not as well suited as the ones that were stripped away by the LNP. That is why we need to be sensible about this, so we end up with regulation that is right for our community and supports our small businesses.

With that, I say that I support the creation of the Small Business Commissioner. As has been said, this is a government that is driving job creation, and they are driving it through small business—support for them and fair work for the small business worker.