




Speech By  
**Robbie Katter**

**MEMBER FOR TRAEGER**

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

 **Mr KATTER** (Traeger—KAP) (6.55 pm): I thank the member for Stafford for mentioning Mount Isa in his contribution. It is important that the committee went there. This is an issue that I find very important to debate in this House, because it represents that tension between economic rationalism and people who see some benefit in preserving small business and having regulation in place. I think it cuts to the heart of why we are here, because there has been such a large trend—a tidal wave—towards this free market ideology to let everything go and the big corporates take over. It is all about the consumers' convenience, their right to have the lowest prices and those sorts of virtues that sound good, but left in the wake is the destruction of small private enterprise in Australia. It is a massive problem, and no-one seems to want to own it.

We can talk about energy and insurance costs, which are important, but there are some economic and policy areas where it has been a case of 'hands off the wheel and let the market decide'. Guess what has happened? We have grown these enormous duopolies. There is a third player in the grocery market now.

Back in the day, the United States said that it is not healthy to have too much market dominance by any players. It is not an issue for any of the major parties in Australia. They have just said, 'We're okay with this.' Here is our one opportunity to provide a small remnant of regulation to protect the battlers out there. Small private enterprises are a dying industry. I did not move to Mount Isa because I just enjoyed living in the sunshine; I moved there to own a small business. It was my one opportunity in life to own a small business. There is not much opportunity to do that anymore in valuations. It has all been swallowed up by the big corporates.

We had some wonderful presenters in Mount Isa. Bob Burrow of Colonial Convenience said exactly that: 'I donate. I have coached boxing and Rugby League out here. I wouldn't have come out here if I didn't have the opportunity to own a small shop.' That is an important part of community fabric and economic fabric that is lost in the mix. If you do not nail your colours to the mast and protect—you need to regulate. That is why we are here: to discern and say, 'Hang on, there is a problem here. We had better step in.' Coles and Woolworths are doing pretty fine without us. They will keep growing their market share. If we are talking about convenience, in Cloncurry Woolies said, 'You know what? We're not making enough money here. Let's just shut down.' They do not have to stay open for seven days and provide this convenience. They will shut down.

Do members know what they did in Pioneer, in Mount Isa, where we have all the public housing and social problems? They just shut down their shop there and it became a lot worse: 'Let's force all the Mount Isa residents into one store.' Then all the advocates in Mount Isa were saying, 'We need more convenience stores because the lines are too big at Woolworths.' Is that the problem with the urban planning or is that Woolworths' problem for not building a bigger store or hiring more employees?

What else happened? Brumbies in Mount Isa, David Griffiths Pharmacy in Charters Towers and Lance and Danny Burkett love hiring people and being engaged in the community. Woolworths and Coles are getting more and more digital checkouts so they hire fewer people. The Labor Party had better acknowledge this, because I thought they were for the workers. I am for the workers. Let's do five years of blocking this off. These guys have had a good run at this. They have plenty of market share. Let's regulate it some more. The KAP flagged our intention very early to move amendments for a five-year moratorium, because that is what is needed. We need something stronger than this to send a signal to small business owners that we do look after them and we will try to protect them from the big guys.

One of the arguments put forward in Mount Isa—curiously, by the chamber of commerce and Mount Isa Tourism—is people out at Clem Walton Park, which is free camping, are not going to come the 50 kilometres into town because when they come into town the grocery store is not open on a Sunday. It was said that when they come in on a Sunday they would magically spend all this extra money buying dresses and shoes when they buy their groceries. I think that is funny. I think that is nonsense. There is no magical tourist dollar that comes into our town because they are going to spend an extra \$100. If they are at Clem Walton camping for free, I can guarantee that they are trying to save money. They are not out there to spend big dollars at the Coles shopping centre in Mount Isa.

This is not going to create additional economic activity that is going to help the other small retailers in the town that are already allowed to open. It does not work like that. It does enhance livability if people can shop—of course it does. Having 24-hour shopping would enhance livability and convenience, but we have to think of the counterpoint and the cost of these things.