




Speech By
Samuel O'Connor

MEMBER FOR BONNEY

Record of Proceedings, 17 March 2022

SMALL BUSINESS COMMISSIONER BILL

 **Mr O'CONNOR** (Bonney—LNP) (5.55 pm): I rise in support of making the Small Business Commissioner permanent and to support the shadow minister's amendments to give this important role more authority. Let us do this properly. I am proud to have, on the latest data I could find, around 5,600 businesses in Bonney in precincts along Brisbane Road and Olsen Avenue, in Harbour Town and, of course, my beloved Chirn Park. Around 94 per cent of those businesses have a turnover of less than \$2 million a year and 79 per cent have a turnover of less than half a million a year, which makes them all very small. I clearly cannot list them all like the member for McConnel did, or even highlight a few regulars of mine for fear of getting in trouble, but I can say the impacts of the last couple of years have been felt by everyone in my part of the Gold Coast, particularly our hospitality industry.

Last night we had a couple of the hardest hit businesses in my electorate visit parliament. They are in the events and live music industry. We hosted Jamie and the boys from EVENTelec, who run the electrical infrastructure for every major event in the country—when they are on—from Splendour to the GC600 to Groovin the Moo, and Steve Cummins from HCC Entertainment who is a great local guy who, on top of leading the longest running Neil Diamond tribute show, also helps run many of our local events like carols, multicultural festivals and New Year's. They were here for the launch of the Parliamentary Friends of the Music Industry. This was a joint initiative of myself, the member for Kurwongbah and the incredible team at QMusic led by CEO Kris Stewart.

I want to place on record my appreciation to our two artists who played that very special gig last night on the parliament deck. We had Sahara Beck from the Sunshine Coast, with an incredible and unique voice, and a very talented emerging artist, Jem Cassar-Daley. I am sure all members who were there would agree that they were brilliant and this whole precinct is perfect for loud live music—it has a very good echo—and it certainly sounded fantastic. We thank these artists for playing in the shadow of our beautiful parliament.

Ms Pease: And thanks to Shane King, the member for Kurwongbah.

Mr O'CONNOR: I mentioned him, thank you.

A government member: Not enough.

Mr O'CONNOR: You can check *Hansard*. I did.

Honourable members interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Bush): Order, members!

Mr O'CONNOR: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. The member for Lytton needs to get her hearing checked.

Ms PEASE: Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I take offence at that. It is also unparliamentary to be critical of another person in such a manner and question them on what might be a disability.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member has taken offence. I ask that you withdraw.

Mr O'CONNOR: I withdraw. I am very happy to check *Hansard* for the shout-out to the member for Kurwongbah in there. There is no better way to showcase the talented artists Queensland has and to remind us all why our music industry is worth backing. We tried to do this in a bipartisan manner. We hope to make this an annual event, so stay tuned for next year's details.

Providing support for people in difficult times when there is a crisis is so important to get right. What I have seen over the last couple of years is many of my small businesses let down repeatedly by this government. That is not just from the uncertainties and inconsistencies with restrictions and regulations. The big issue was the lack of grants available when those snap decisions were made. It was always a struggle to get anything out of this government. It was never an easy process. Even when it was finally agreed to, generally with the help of the federal government, it took far too long for the state government to figure out how to roll out the support. We have proudly and continuously called for the government to improve communication and transparency around COVID restrictions and health directives for small businesses.

We have been constructive, putting suggestions on the table for support packages with measures such as targeted grants, payroll tax relief and sick-leave cover. This bill will retain something from COVID that worked well by permanently establishing the Small Business Commissioner and the supporting office. It will provide a statutory basis for the commissioner's dispute resolution functions regarding retail tenancy disputes and allow mediation for commercial leasing and small business franchise disputes on an opt-in basis only.