




Speech By
Brent Mickelberg

MEMBER FOR BUDERIM

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**QUEENSLAND FOOD FARMERS' COMMISSIONER BILL; CROSS-BORDER
COMMISSIONER BILL; NIGHT-LIFE ECONOMY COMMISSIONER BILL**

 **Mr MICKELBERG** (Buderim—LNP) (7.22 pm): I rise to speak to the Night-Life Economy Commissioner Bill. I note that I am the first speaker to speak to that particular aspect of this cognate debate. I note that the minister to whom the power created in this bill will vest is not speaking to this, and that says everything about this third-term tired Labor government. This is all about the announcements and it is not about the substance of the issue.

Government members interjected.

Mr MICKELBERG: I hear those members opposite chirping away and they are not in their correct seats. These guys are all about the photo-op, but they are not about the follow-up. That is why we are debating three bills in 40 minutes today.

The issues surrounding Queensland's night-life economy and late-night small businesses are very genuine and the LNP will not be opposing this bill today. This bill, though, does not feel like a genuine attempt to implement the solutions for the night-time economy. It has been rushed through very shortly before a state election with no consultation—and they are not my words; that is what the explanatory notes say—and no engagement with industry. This is a political fix. This is not a real solution to the problem. Queenslanders are not stupid; they can see right through these sorts of pathetic political stunts. Nonetheless, the issues around the night-time economy are real and they have been real for many years. We need better than this rushed attempt to push through three bills in 40 minutes to try to secure a few votes in two months time.

Queensland businesses need proper support and they need a considered approach to help them remain viable and flourish into the future. Sadly, we have seen many late-night venues shut their doors for good right across the state, including NightQuarter on the Sunshine Coast and more recently The Zoo in Fortitude Valley. They have not felt supported by this third-term Labor government and unfortunately they have been left to face the music on the day the music died. The struggles go beyond music venues; small and family businesses of all kinds are not trading as well as they could when the sun goes down.

In terms of employment, many Queenslanders need jobs in the late-night economy. Maybe they are students or they need to care for children during the day while their partner is at work. It is an important area of our Queensland economy but it is dying. The idea of a night-life commissioner is okay, but it is only okay if it is going to be implemented properly. That is why it astounds me that no consultation has been done in relation to this. The industry deserves better; stakeholders deserve better. It is not just about businesses; communities are impacted by the night-time economy as well. This government, just as they do so often on issues like crime and just about every single issue they are faced with, chooses to ignore the voices of our communities.

Over the last four years since I became a shadow minister I have met with many of those venue owners and advocates: people like QMusic and JC Collins. A couple of weeks ago I was in the Woolshed in the electorate of Cairns with our candidate for Barron River, Bree James. They were celebrating their 25th anniversary and they were telling me times have never been tougher. That is for an iconic venue like the Woolshed in Cairns. They deserve better than what they are getting from this third-term Labor government.

The issue with this bill is that it is just an attempt to fix a political problem rather than to provide a genuine solution to the problem. We need to ensure that we address all of the concerns. One of the issues that has been raised is the provision of late-night public transport. It is going to be pretty difficult to get more people to attend precincts across the state at all hours of the night when they cannot even get home. Living in my part of the world on the Sunshine Coast, if I wanted to come and watch a concert in Brisbane—admittedly it is not something I have done lately—this Saturday night, I would have to get on a train by 8.30 pm in order to get home. That is simply not going to encourage anyone to use public transport because they would not be able to get home to the Sunshine Coast. Even then, that would only get me home to Nambour. I would have to catch a bus, which frequently does not run either. These are the kinds of issues that a night-time economy commissioner could address.

With a consultation process that is non-existent, with an engagement process that is non-existent, with a lack of any substance—the government's commitment to this is writ large when the minister will not even speak to the bill. This is nothing more than a stunt and Queensland businesses deserve better. Queensland communities deserve better. These problems will not be addressed unless there is a genuine commitment to addressing them. We heard about the Queensland Small Business Commissioner. She is not independent and she has no powers to intervene. She can advocate. That is great and Dominique Lamb does a lot of great work in that regard, but the reality is that we need independent commissioners and they need to be empowered with the resources to fix these issues in our communities.