




Speech By  
**Dr Christian Rowan**

**MEMBER FOR MOGGILL**

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### **TRADING (ALLOWABLE HOURS) AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Dr ROWAN** (Moggill—LNP) (5.46 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the debate on the Trading (Allowable Hours) Amendment Bill 2017. The Trading (Allowable Hours) Amendment Bill 2017 was introduced as a way of amending the Trading (Allowable Hours) Act 1990 to seek to reduce restrictions on trading hours in Queensland. The Trading (Allowable Hours) Amendment Bill 2017 is trying to achieve the policy objectives of the government by amending the Trading (Allowable Hours) Act 1990 to give effect to a range of reform measures to broaden and simplify Queensland's allowable trading hours whilst at the same time also ensuring important protections for retail workers.

The task force headed by the former Labor member for Logan, Mr John Mickel, produced a report for the government that recommended several important changes to the current trading hours operating framework. Unfortunately, the adverse effects of this legislation on small retail traders and the adverse consequences of Sunday trading for car and caravan retailers and the impact on associated small business owners was overlooked, particularly with respect to the initial proposal tabled by the Labor government. I oppose this bill because of my previous comments and the overall expected outcomes of the changes to operating hours for a number of different types of retail outlets. Also today we are seeing a number of amendments that are being rushed into the parliament as a part of the minister's desperate last-ditch plan to resuscitate her flawed bill, which has been on life support over the last few months.

It is very important to note that during the whole of the Labor government's inquiry the committee heard absolutely no support from the motor vehicle dealer and caravan retail industries. I do acknowledge that the minister's proposed amendments for motor vehicle dealers and caravan retailers, but this shambolic set of circumstances could have been avoided with a simple phone call prior to the design of the legislation and prior to its original introduction into the Queensland parliament. The Motor Trades Association of Queensland, the MTAQ, stated that there is no empirical evidence of consumers seeking Sunday trading with respect to motor vehicle dealers. The consensus view of its members was that the current QIRC trading hours non-exempt shops selling motor vehicles state order be retained with no changes and that the legislation be amended to reflect this view. LNP members on this side of the House would still encourage the government to further consider other industries and sectors that still remain concerned about being impacted negatively by this legislation, particularly given the public views being aired today by the National Retail Association and others.

As previously mentioned, in August 2016 the Palaszczuk Labor government announced a review of trading hours to be headed by former Speaker and former Labor transport and industrial relations minister Mr John Mickel. The Mickel report made some 13 recommendations. However, the reference group never emphatically endorsed the report and its contained recommendations. This is an important point that this House should take note of.

It should come as no surprise that the Labor government has agreed to scrap planned changes for motor vehicle and caravan dealers due to the negative and detrimental impacts to their industry and consumers from the proposed changes contained within the bill. We on this side of the House agree

that the current system has become far too convoluted and cumbersome; however, the proposed changes in the legislation are not the answer, and the government has failed to make the case for their changes. The only solution at this point in time is to take the whole process back to the start with proper consultation, which has been sadly lacking by this government with respect to its overall legislative agenda. Certainly this is the feedback I have received from small business owners and industry group representatives with whom I have met over the last few months.

As usual, and sadly, Labor government members are taking flawed orders from their union masters and are paying absolutely no attention to the serious impact of their proposed changes on both industry and consumers and to what their changes will mean for jobs right across Queensland. The Chamber of Commerce & Industry Queensland, CCIQ, which represents the interests of over 414,000 small businesses right across Queensland, has indicated that it is deeply concerned in relation to the market dominance of major corporate organisations and how the proposed trading hours changes will not benefit their members.

The current trading hours framework in Queensland unquestionably offers businesses in regional areas their last competitive edge by allowing them to trade when non-exempt stores are required to remain closed. The CCIQ has stated that if this legislation passes the sustainability of small business communities will be placed at significant risk and that a negative impact would be the net job losses that would occur. It does not support the view expressed in the Mickel report that there would be an increase of more than 900 jobs. The CCIQ does, however, support a simplification of the previous system of complex boundaries. However, what is needed is a raft of other measures implemented as a part of this bill to afford small businesses every opportunity to remain competitive.

The Chamber of Commerce & Industry Queensland acknowledges the important need to cut red tape, as do we on this side of the House, and to alleviate the confusion that currently exists. However, wisely in my view, it also opposes the full deregulation of trading hours. With the current format of the Trading (Allowable Hours) Amendment Bill 2017, LNP members jointly oppose the bill due to the large monopoly and duopoly entities that will benefit from the bill as, in essence, the resultant impact will be a reduction in the competitiveness of independent stores.

As stakeholders have indicated, the last thing that is needed is an extension of trading hours that risks the livelihood of thousands of independent Queensland retail businesses. The LNP will always stand up for small business. We know that the Palaszczuk Labor cabinet is in crisis, that it is anti jobs and that it is captive to unions. We know that the Palaszczuk Labor government always fails to consult and consequently introduces flawed legislation into this parliament.

The LNP has heard the views of the Motor Trades Association of Queensland, the Master Growers, Hardware Australia and the Chamber of Commerce & Industry Queensland. The chief executive of the National Retail Association, Dominique Lamb, said—

Queensland retailers have been fighting with one arm tied behind their backs as they are forced to close their doors and hand the market over to Internet stores and overseas competition from the likes of Amazon.

Dominique Lamb went on to say—

Now this state government has tied the other arm behind their backs as well.

Despite the rhetoric of Labor, the Palaszczuk Labor government has failed to deliver a fair outcome with respect to this legislation. The LNP will always stand up for small business and will always support fair competition and the jobs of Queenslanders.