




Speech By
Mark Boothman

MEMBER FOR THEODORE

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TRADING (ALLOWABLE HOURS) AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr BOOTHMAN** (Theodore—LNP) (11.48 am): I rise to make a contribution to the Trading (Allowable Hours) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. The committee has worked on the issue of allowable trading hours for quite some time. We travelled to different areas throughout Queensland to consult with small business owners. The situation in the regions is very different to South-East Queensland. In South-East Queensland we are lucky to have an economy of scale with our mass of population. Through COVID that insulated us to a reasonable degree in a lot of areas. In my neck of the woods on the northern Gold Coast, that certainly was the case.

When we went travelling throughout Queensland we found that a lot of other areas were not so lucky. The committee went to Cairns and Mossman. The member for Southern Downs and I went for a walk around the shops and spoke to a fair few business owners in Cairns, and during the COVID period they suffered terribly.

Mr Stevens: They're still suffering.

Mr BOOTHMAN: Yes, I take that interjection. It was certainly a very tough time for those businesses and we do need to take that into account when considering this legislation and the moratorium itself in that they did not have enough time to make the contemplated adjustments. We also need to take into consideration the evolution of the internet, so to speak. Many people now do 24-hour shopping on the internet and that is having a direct impact on those businesses, especially in Cairns but in South-East Queensland as well.

When we were in Cairns the member for Southern Downs and I went to a lovely little cafe and spoke to someone there. We asked him what he thought about changing the trading hours in the Cairns area. He said that they are having enough trouble getting enough workers to fill the job vacancies in those areas and therefore he was very concerned about the impact additional trading hours would have. As he said, 'I work seven days a week. I'm worked off my feet. I have no life with my family.' This is one important aspect that this bill needs to address—that is, the work-life balance.

In places like Mount Isa there was a very good turn-up to the committee hearing. The member for Southern Downs and I again went for a walk around the business precinct and spoke to a lady from the local bakery. Her comments were very interesting. She said that if the big end of town was allowed to open on Sundays it would kill her business because she gets a lot of tourist traffic coming through and they go to the Bakers Delight and support her business. It was one of her biggest days of the week and therefore that was her niche market.

I take my comments back to my electorate in the northern Gold Coast and my local SPAR, and this is my fear for these regional towns. As I say, in South-East Queensland we have the economies of scale and the masses of population. These more regional areas do not have this. As an example, Duncan and Grant who run my local SPAR at Oxenford work seven days a week. They have to. They reinvent their business regularly. They sell some of the best hot food anywhere on the northern Gold Coast—the greatest pies.

The Leader of the Opposition actually had a pie there after a press conference. This business, as I said, tries to reinvent itself regularly, but it still has the economies of scale and the population in the area to cater to. Places like Stanthorpe and Mount Isa do not have that. If we allowed the big end of town to open those additional hours on the extra day, that would crucify those businesses. That is the important part that we have to understand—that is, we have to give the small guy that little bit of help to fight back and remain viable.

One of the points I brought up in the committee process was mapping for the Gold Coast tourism area. I asked the department if it could make a visual map to make it easier for local retailers to understand where the tourism area ended, and I am thankful that the department did take that on board because it can be quite confusing and it is an issue that has come up previously in my office.

There are many other parts of the bill, and this is where I will get to supporting the Deputy Leader of the Opposition's amendments. Businesses are continuing to expand and we need to cater for the expansion of those businesses, so I support the amendment of the deputy leader in terms of the definition of an independent retail shop to be increased from 30 to 40 employees and from 100 to 150 employees for multiple shops. We need to give incentives to these individuals to expand their businesses and to create jobs in these local areas.

Very importantly, these local small businesses and independent retailers work hand in hand with our local community groups, and we have to remember that. As an example, my local Bakers Delight is supplying all of the bread rolls and all of the loaves of bread for this weekend's Guanaba Rural Fire Brigade open day. It is supporting its local community. It is willing to give back to the local community. We heard time and time again in Mount Isa, Townsville and all of the other places that these local businesses are more than happy to give back by sponsoring the local sporting teams, help the Lions clubs, help the Rotary clubs and help the rural fire brigades. Those businesses are really willing to do the grassroots on this; therefore, we need to encourage these businesses to expand further. I certainly do support the deputy leader's acknowledgement of this issue.

As we have been through a long COVID period I also support the deputy leader's amendment to increase the moratorium from one year to five years. It gives these businesses additional time to adjust and work out ways of combating the evolution of the internet, because a lot of these businesses are struggling against the internet. As I said earlier, for places such as Cairns, having the COVID lockdown for a long period of time means that a lot of those businesses have not recovered in those areas, so it is very important that we get this right to ensure that there are no changes after 12 months. We need to ensure there is a good, long period where these businesses can have a chance to survive. It is critical that the House does support these amendments that the Deputy Leader of the Opposition will move.

I want to thank my fellow committee members and the secretariat staff for the excellent work that we did on this bill. Again, we do need to take into consideration what COVID has done and we need to ensure that there is a good period of time for a moratorium from one to five years.