




Speech By
Mark Boothman

MEMBER FOR THEODORE

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EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING COMMITTEE

Report, Motion to Take Note

 **Mr BOOTHMAN** (Theodore—LNP) (3.21 pm): I too rise to talk about the Education, Employment and Training Committee's report No. 15 on our inquiry into the operation of the Trading (Allowable Hours) Act 1990. From the outset I thank my fellow committee members. Certainly it was an interesting time. As the member for Hinchinbrook said, we travelled to many parts of Queensland including Mossman, Cairns, Townsville and Mount Isa and we also held hearings in Brisbane.

The inquiry highlighted the simple fact that the economies of scale in the south-east corner are very different to those in regional areas. For example, as I alluded to in my speech on the bill itself, Cairns was hit heavily during the COVID period. The member for Southern Downs and I walked through the city and spoke to operators in cafes and gift shops. We wanted to find out how they were affected by the COVID lockdowns, how they are getting back on their feet and also about obviously the impacts of trading hours. We found that a lot of those individuals are just coming through one of the scariest times of their lives when they were not sure if they would be forced to close their businesses because of a lack of customers. They were literally living day by day. That is why the opposition moved some amendments about extending the moratorium to five years, to give those businesses certainty.

Another issue that we found related to Mount Isa. I want to allude to some comments that were made during the committee process. It was suggested that a lot of small corner stores could not get newspapers; only the large supermarkets could get newspapers delivered. If the market is fairly distributed then even small businesses should be able to operate on an even playing field. It shows that, unfortunately, in those areas the bigger supermarkets certainly have a leg-up and that causes the small operators deep concern.

The member for Maroochydore alluded to the fact that many small operators give a lot back to their communities. In my speech on the bill I spoke about a local business in my electorate, Bakers Delight at Oxenford. Recently they baked all the bread and bread rolls for the local Guanaba Rural Fire Brigade's family fun day. That was a very kind donation. There was a lot of bread. My ute was completely full of bread and bread rolls. The Guanaba Rural Fire Brigade put on a sausage sizzle and cooked cheeseburgers for their family fun day. A lot of people from the community came to support the Guanaba Rural Fire Brigade. That shows how small businesses are very much in touch with and look after their local communities. We need to do everything we can to ensure their viability going forward.

While my local SPAR is in a very different situation to similar shops in, say, Mount Isa, it has to compete against the big end of town, which regularly tries to undercut it on prices in every way, shape and form. That makes things very difficult so the SPAR tries to reinvent itself all the time. The issue we have is that the rural and regional towns potentially do not have a workforce with specialist skills such as specialist bakers and pastry chefs have. That makes it extremely difficult for a SPAR or a FoodWorks in places like Mount Isa. We need to make sure that there is an even playing field going forward, because the big end of town is nowhere near as supportive as are my local businesses. As we heard

during the committee process, they are nowhere near as supportive as businesses in Mount Isa that regularly give to local sporting clubs. We need to explore every avenue possible to protect small businesses.