

Speech

House of Assembly - Wednesday, 14 March 2012, Page 690

STATUTES AMENDMENT (SHOP TRADING AND HOLIDAYS) BILL

Mr BROCK (Frome) (19:30): I would like to talk on this proposed bill that is before us tonight, and I want to make it very clear that I am a believer in people who work at various times being correctly remunerated accordingly and being remunerated accordingly through the appropriate channels, that is, the industrial relations system. I would also like to make it quite clear that I certainly believe that retail facilities should be able to trade at what they consider the best times and certainly agree that the trading hours for Rundle Mall in Adelaide should be when appropriate.

I have previously worked in small business, operating a roadhouse at Port Augusta and, although it may have been many years ago, I certainly have a fair understanding of the constraints and challenges that are facing small business in regional South Australia. My partner, Lyn, is also a small business operator—and I make that quite clear. We have a small business in Port Pirie (a hairdressing salon), and we are certainly affected by any proposal that may happen. The proposed bill before us now has, in my opinion, been very badly promoted outside the Adelaide metropolitan area.

People I have spoken to in regional South Australia regarding this bill thought it only related to the CBD area and, in particular, to the Rundle Mall operations. I would also like to point out that Port Pirie in particular has enjoyed deregulated trading hours, and at one time the supermarket chains of Coles and Woolworths, both endeavouring to obtain the greater share of business in the retail sector, actually operated 24 hours per day, seven days per week. This certainly was very appreciated by those who wanted to shop at these times, in particular, shiftworkers from the smelters, those in hospitality, and also the health service nurses and doctors.

If those people who wanted to work during these times did so, they were appropriately remunerated for their services under the appropriate awards, and this is still the case today through the industrial relations system. I repeat: this is still the case today, as I understand it, through the industrial relations system. We can still allow for the extra trading hours for businesses in Rundle Mall without creating additional half-day holidays. We already have sufficient holidays in this state, and small businesses are always struggling to cope with the extra demands and remunerations they have to pay out.

The times the government is proposing—that is, Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve—will have a dramatic effect on small businesses, and if they do open then they will not be able to pay the increased rates of pay without increasing the rates of their services dramatically. They may still operate, but they will only operate their businesses themselves, saving the wages. By doing this, they will prevent those who may have worked under the current award systems, receiving no pay whatsoever.

It was mentioned earlier that there are many people who take these part-time jobs and may be working only five or six hours a week, but they may be eliminated and prevented from getting any remuneration on these two particular days. Small business operators in South Australia are already struggling, and it is in these times that they may be able to just make up some of the leeway with their overdrafts and overcome some of the financial constraints they already have.

It appears that Business SA has not really communicated or consulted with their smaller business members, because of the ever-increasing responses which are coming forward now. I am still receiving phone calls and letters from all over my electorate of Frome—in particular from Clare, and also from Port Pirie and Port Broughton—asking me not to vote for the half-day holidays.

I have spoken to numerous business organisations and chambers of commerce. The first that they were aware of the true direction of this proposal was by reading it in the media or being

advised by me. They were under the impression that this bill only related to the CBD area of Adelaide and, in particular, to try to get extra trading hours for Rundle Mall.

Although I live in a regional location where trading hours are extended for seven days a week, I believe that the people in the City of Adelaide deserve the same opportunities that we enjoy in regional South Australia. They can enjoy these extra facilities by allowing the extra trading hours but not by creating additional public holidays. If these business operators elect to close at these times, then not only will the current staff not get any pay but it will have a dramatic effect on tourism in these regional areas, and other locations and businesses also could suffer.

I do not have to answer to any political party. I am representing the businesspeople in my electorate, and the people who work there, and I am doing so tonight. I cannot endorse nor support the bill in its current form and I encourage the government to seriously consider the small business operators in the state and to do everything in its power to ensure their continued viability. I certainly hope that the government will look at increasing the opportunity for trading hours in the metropolitan area of Adelaide, but not at creating an extra financial burden in penalty rates.