

RETAIL TRADING HOURS

**565. Mr F.A. ALBAN to the Minister for Commerce:**

I note some concerns are being voiced about the extension of retail trading hours and possible effects on small business, particularly those based in larger shopping centres. Can the minister please explain what is being done to address potential issues?

**Mr T.R. BUSWELL replied:**

I thank the member for Swan Hills for his interest in retail trading. I know for a fact that one of the reasons that the member for Swan Hills has such an interest in retail trading is that he took an opportunity in the lead-up to considerations of retail trading hours to ask his constituents what they thought. He took a view, which is a view that the government holds, that it is time for consumers in Western Australia to have an opportunity to move forward with retail trading and the hours in which they can choose to shop. That is indeed the position of the government. A progressive Premier who wants this Parliament —

**Mr V.A. Catania:** Is that all the government?

**Mr T.R. BUSWELL:** I will get to the member in a minute!

It is the position of a progressive Premier who wants the consumers in the Perth metropolitan area to have the right to shop between six and nine o'clock on weeknights if they see fit. One would think from the response of members opposite that this is an amazing leap forward. Only a couple of years ago, on 31 December 2006, the Leader of the Opposition, who was then acting Premier—we loved it when he was acting Premier when we were on that side because he always came up with a few gems—said about trading hours —

It is in the interests of consumers and the state to realise Perth's potential by having a rational system of retail trading hours — not the absurd and irrational system we have at the moment.

What has happened to the Leader of the Opposition? What has happened to his reformist zeal? He has become the modern day version of King Ludd leading his Luddites into battle!

**Mr E.S. Ripper:** Does the Treasurer think there is adequate legal protection for small business wanting their right to trade or not trade?

**Mr T.R. BUSWELL:** I am happy that the Leader of the Opposition raised the interjection. From a person who, when Treasurer, did everything he could under the state taxation system to squeeze the lifeblood out of small businesses in Western Australia, a person who, when he was involved in government, did every single thing he could do to bind them up in red tape so they could not breathe.

**Mr E.S. Ripper:** Is this how the Treasurer asks for our votes?

**Mr T.R. BUSWELL:** The Leader of the Opposition comes into this place —

*Point of Order*

**Mr P.B. WATSON:** I am sure that the member who asked the question would be very disappointed with the answer. He asked how they would protect small business people, and the minister has not addressed that issue.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Before the Treasurer responds to that point of order, as many members who have been in this place for a period of time would know, accepting an interjection often moves the answer to the question to another area. I suggest the Treasurer get back on track. There is no point of order.

*Questions without Notice Resumed*

**Mr T.R. BUSWELL:** And right you are, Mr Speaker.

**Mr E.S. Ripper** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Order, Leader of the Opposition!

**Mr T.R. BUSWELL:** Let us look at the concerns—the legitimate concerns—that have been raised by small business, and a large number of members on this side, in particular in relation to commercial tenancy arrangements. I think that is what the Leader of the Opposition is getting at. As the Leader of the Opposition would be aware, when the Labor Party was in government in 2003, a review into commercial tenancies was effectively concluded. We need to remember what happened. This Leader of the Opposition is the person who, when in government, had the opportunity to make changes.

**Mr V.A. Catania** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Order, member for North West!

**Mr A.J. Waddell** interjected.

**Mr T.R. BUSWELL:** Mr Speaker, where is Princess Leia chained up today, I ask myself!

This is the situation. A review was conducted into residential tenancies. How many recommendations did it make? Sixty-one! If members opposite are so serious about protecting small business, and they get a report with 61 recommendations, we might reckon that they would run out and do something about it! Well, the former government addressed, in the five years in which it had the report, nine of those recommendations. Do members know what will happen? In the spring sitting of this Parliament, a piece of legislation will be introduced that will legislatively address the balance of those recommendations. That is what will happen. We see an issue and we deal with it. Members opposite saw an issue in relation to small business and they sat on it.

**Mr F.M. Logan** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Order, member for Cockburn!

**Mr T.R. BUSWELL:** The member for Cockburn did not even know the gas plant had blown up! He bombed!

We will be introducing a range of initiatives to address four key issues. The first initiative is to improve the disclosure regime so that tenants—mainly small business tenants—can make more informed decisions. The second is to improve security of tenure for small business. The third is to help small businesses in the way they negotiate with landlords, in particular to make sure that landlords cannot pass legal costs back to the tenants through various rents and charges. The fourth is to introduce consistent and equitable rent reviews. We are not going to go back to the past. We hope members opposite will come on this journey with us, as, indeed, they wanted to do a few years ago. The \$60 000 that the former Premier, the member for Willagee, spent last year on market research with Luscombe and Associates shows that that is what the public of Western Australia wants the government to do.

I am interested in the comments of the member for North West. “Make no changes!”, he says. “Do not let the shoppers in the metropolitan area go shopping after six o’clock!”

**Mr W.J. Johnston** interjected.

**Mr T.R. BUSWELL:** Ring up Joe Bullock and find out what to say, my friend!

The member for North West represents an electorate that is book-ended by two towns—Carnarvon and Karratha.

**Mr W.J. Johnston** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Order, member for Cannington!

**Mr T.R. BUSWELL:** People in Carnarvon can go shopping until 8.30 in the evening, six nights a week. People in Karratha can go shopping until nine o’clock in the evening, seven days a week.

**Mr V.A. Catania:** How do you know?

**Mr T.R. BUSWELL:** We rang them up this morning! We rang up Coles in Karratha and we rang up Woolies in Carnarvon, and we asked them! We should ask them to check their CCTV to see how many times the member for North West goes into those stores! That is the situation. It is good enough for people in Carnarvon and it is good enough for people in Karratha, but it is not good enough for the people of Perth. Break out, Leader of the Opposition! Throw away King Ludd’s crown!