

RETAIL TRADING HOURS, REGULATION

**494. Mr A.P. O'GORMAN to the Premier:**

Mr Speaker -

Several members interjected

The SPEAKER: Members!

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The SPEAKER: Members! The member for Joondalup is trying to ask a question. If he cannot ask his question, question time will finish.

Mr A.P. O'GORMAN: Following the rally at Burswood today, will the Premier please outline the Government's position on retail trading hours regulation?

*Point of Order*

Mr R.C. KUCERA: We at this end of the Chamber could not hear anything that the member said.

Mr C.J. Barnett: Go back to the back bench where you belong.

The SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition!

Mr J.N. Hyde interjected.

Mr C.J. Barnett interjected.

The SPEAKER: I call to order the member for Perth and the Leader of the Opposition. I ask the member for Joondalup to repeat his question. I will call to order anyone who interjects.

*Questions without Notice Resumed*

Mr A.P. O'GORMAN: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Following the rally at Burswood today, will the Premier please outline the Government's position on retail trading hours regulation?

**Dr G.I. GALLOP replied:**

As members know, the Government is engaged in consultation with the community on the very important issue of retail trading hours in Western Australia. I understand that a forum was held today and that it was well attended. The Government welcomes the good turnout. The Minister for Consumer and Employment Protection attended that forum. As you, Mr Speaker, know, we are looking for feedback from the community on this important question. The National Competition Council has told the Western Australian Government that if it does not -

Dr J.M. Woollard interjected.

The SPEAKER: I call the member for Alfred Cove to order for the first time.

Dr G.I. GALLOP: The National Competition Council has made it clear to the State of Western Australia that, because of the agreement between the federal Government and the States on competition policy, the laws we have in Western Australia do not meet the criteria and we could therefore experience a substantial penalty in compensation payments.

Mr C.J. Barnett: How much?

Dr G.I. GALLOP: It will not tell us how much. It says a "substantial portion" of the \$70 million that we are expecting to get under the national competition policy guidelines. We have gone to the people of Western Australia and outlined the facts, and we are seeking their views on this important subject.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order! I call the member for Alfred Cove to order for the second time. I warn members that adverse interjections at this late stage in question time will not be tolerated any further.

Dr G.I. GALLOP: We want an informed debate on this issue. At the meeting today -

Mr P.G. Pendal interjected.

Dr G.I. GALLOP: The member for South Perth has come back from his overseas trip full of vim and vigour. We know exactly what position we took going to the election and we know exactly what position we took to the National Competition Council. However, we are representatives of the people of Western Australia, and it

would be a major difficulty for the Government to suffer a serious cut in its revenue at the moment, given the pressures and demands it is experiencing.

Several members interjected.

Dr G.I. GALLOP: We will talk about sell-outs in a minute. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition was in good form today. He is always in good form at these public gatherings. At the forum today he said, "the National Competition Council has got new guidelines" and "those guidelines provide very explicitly that when you make changes that affect people adversely you have to pay compensation". Unfortunately, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition is not with us today, but perhaps the Leader of the Opposition will ring him and tell him that when he comes to Parliament tomorrow, we would love to see these National Competition Council guidelines relating to compensation.

My colleague the Minister for Consumer and Employment Protection was at the forum. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition also said, "Any talk of deregulation is pretty much signing a death warrant for hundreds, maybe thousands of small businesses in this State." That is the view that the Deputy Leader of the Opposition presented to the meeting. It is interesting that the Leader of the Opposition was in Albany only a few days ago and was reported in the *Albany Advertiser* of 6 March in an article headed "Deregulation unavoidable" as saying -

Mr Barnett said the trend over the past 20 years has seen the natural deregulation of trading hours and that it could not be avoided over time.

"If I told you there wasn't going to be deregulation I'd be telling you a lie,"

The Deputy Leader of the Opposition is saying that deregulation is a death warrant and the Leader of the Opposition is telling us that deregulation is inevitable. I will clear this matter up and ask the Leader of the Opposition two questions: firstly, does he have a policy on the deregulation of trading hours?

*Point of Order*

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I would be delighted to answer the question but I would need your support, Mr Speaker, to answer it. You ruled me out of order last time.

The SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

*Questions without Notice Resumed*

Dr G.I. GALLOP: The second interesting question is this: when this matter comes to final determination, will the Opposition have a policy?

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order!

Dr G.I. GALLOP: The Government of Western Australia is engaged in a process of consultation following which it will announce a policy, and it will be held to account for that policy. Will the Opposition have a policy on this matter?

Mr C.J. Barnett: Yes.

Dr G.I. GALLOP: When will the Opposition have the policy?

Mr C.J. Barnett: If you arrange for the Speaker to give me the call, I will give you a half-hour talk about trading hours right now - no notes, no preparation.

Dr G.I. GALLOP: This is the Leader of the Opposition who said in this Parliament on 27 February, when he asked me a question about matters before the Royal Commission Into Whether There Has Been Any Corrupt or Criminal Conduct by Western Australian Police Officers, that it was a question to which he did not know the answer. Was the Leader of the Opposition telling the truth when he said that in the Legislative Assembly? We know he has form on these matters. He is not willing to answer the question about what the opposition policy is now. He tells us the Opposition will have a policy, but he does not tell us when we will hear about that policy.

The Opposition is riddled with divisions and it does not have a unified position on this subject, which is clearly indicated by the differences between the leader and the deputy. This Government of Western Australia is honest with the people about the national competition policy; it will develop a position and it will be accountable for that.