

Retail Trading Hours — Adjournment Debate

HON JIM CHOWN (Agricultural) [10.17 pm]: Last Thursday, 3 September, I was returning from a meeting in Corrigin. I exited Brookton Highway to get on to Albany Highway out at Armadale to commence driving towards the city. The traffic density was light to moderate. As I progressed further towards the city, the traffic density started to increase. In fact when I got to around Cannington it became almost rush hour in both directions. Initially, I thought there might have been some sort of accident, but the reason for the increase in the density of traffic soon became apparent. I was approaching the Westfield Carousel shopping centre. Obviously there is a great number of working families availing themselves of the opportunity—the narrow window that we have in this state—to access retail outlets during extended trading hours on Thursday evenings. It took only a quick phone call to Westfield's state retail leasing manager to inform me that there are 3 000 parking bays at Carousel shopping centre. He also informed me that on a Thursday evening, 95 per cent of those parking bays are used; that is, about 2 750 people from working families attend this shopping centre. That of course is exemplified throughout the metro area.

If the opposition wants a mandate on why extended trading hours need to be put in place, there it is. If members opposite went into their electorates and spoke to people who were engaged in the workforce they would find that most people nowadays would be appreciative of having extended trading hours in this city. In fact, as a country member who now resides in Perth, I find it absolutely extraordinary that we cannot shop after six o'clock but we can go to a liquor outlet and buy booze up until 8.30 at night! We are in the twenty-first century here—please!

In so far as the National Party's exemption from this debate, which was brought forward by Hon Sue Ellery, let me inform the house that currently trading hours can be amended for areas outside the metropolitan area by ministerial order. Many regional towns currently operate under extended trading hours and the granting of these orders is generally contingent upon evidence showing local government community support for change. In fact, in Denmark—which is the electorate of the Minister for Agriculture and Food, Mr Terry Redman—shops can trade from 8.00 am to 9.00 pm. But the fact is the National Party does not have an electorate in the metro area. In this instance I am talking about the metropolitan area. Two parties are involved—the Liberal Party and the Labor Party. The Liberal Party wants extended trading hours. The Labor Party has flip-flopped and gone to water on this issue.

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich interjected.

Hon JIM CHOWN: That does not matter. Labor Party members should represent the majority of electors in this city.

Hon Ken Travers: Are you going to vote on this issue, because you are not a metropolitan member?

Hon JIM CHOWN: I have as much right to speak on this issue as any other member in this house, and I intend to do so.

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order! Perhaps the member might address his remarks to the Chair. That is one of the rules of debate. Other members will then not have an excuse to interject.

Hon JIM CHOWN: Thank you, Mr President. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, in 2009 —

Point of Order

Hon KEN TRAVERS: I ask that the member identify the document he is referring to.

Debate Resumed

Hon JIM CHOWN: I am referring to a document from the Australian Bureau of Statistics that has been researched by my office and is titled, "1367.5 — Western Australian Statistical Indicators, June 2009".

The structure of the Western Australian workforce is very different today from what it was 30 years ago. In 1979, by far the largest group in full-time employment in the Western Australian workforce was males. Males comprised 62 per cent of the workforce. By 2009, male full-time workers comprised only 45 per cent of the labour force. As a corollary, the number of male part-time workers has increased by between three per cent and eight per cent. Over the same period, and this is the important point, Hon Ken Travers, the number of female part-time workers has increased from 14 per cent to 20 per cent. The number of female full-time workers has increased from 21 per cent to 24 per cent of the total workforce. This indicates that, as opposed to previous years, both mum and dad are working. Members would be aware that most people work from between 8.00 am and 8.30 pm to between 4.30 pm and 5.00 pm. Most people residing in the metropolitan area would spend between 45 minutes to an hour getting home from work. That is the reason that we need extended trading hours.

In December 2007 the Australian Institute of Chartered Accountants released the results of a local survey done in August 2007 into the issue of regulated trading hours in Western Australia. The institute surveyed over 200 members and chartered accountants program candidates based in Western Australia to assess their views on retail trading hours. Eighty-one per cent of respondents believed that deregulated trading hours in Western Australia would have a positive impact on the state. In fact, 50 per cent of respondents expressed a preference for complete deregulation of trading hours. The four main reasons given by these respondents were, firstly, greater convenience, 39 per cent; secondly, it makes Perth more attractive to tourists and young people, 24 per cent; thirdly, it provides for balanced work and family commitments, 18 per cent; and, fourthly, it creates more jobs and employment opportunities, 10 per cent.

I ask the Labor Party to come on board with this initiative. I am sure it would not like mum or dad to say when they go to the fridge at seven o'clock on a weeknight, "Well, there's no fresh milk and there's no fresh bread, but there is a tin of peaches. I will never vote Labor again."

We are living in the twenty-first century. Perth is labelled as Dullsville, thanks to the Labor Party. The Labor Party's initiative to remove Perth's Dullsville label was to put a Ferris wheel on the Perth foreshore. That Ferris wheel exemplifies the Labor Party, which opposes extended trading hours, because it is static. It can be seen but it does move. It actually rotates in one spot and that is what the Labor Party has demonstrated in this house on this issue. There is more. The Ferris wheel can be accessed until 9.00 pm. I hope that by the time the retail trading hours issue is next before this house or the other place the Labor Party has reconsidered its position, has changed its thinking about representing this community and votes for the deregulation of trading hours.