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Robbie Katter MP Member for Mount Isa



14th of November 2016

The Chair
Trading Hours Review Reference Group
Via email

Members of the Trading Hours Review Reference Group,

As a regional MP who was born and raised in rural North Queensland I realise the importance of supporting the fragile structure of the local economy. Previously operating my own business in the Mount Isa region, serving on the Mount Isa City Council for four years from 2008-2012, and now working as the State member for a second term I have seen firsthand the consequences changes to trading hours may have on the region.

The framework currently operating within the Mount Isa Electorate is one that best reflects the economic and social desires of the city, taking into account employment and economic growth while continuing to balance the interests of consumers, workers and small and large businesses. Many residents are rightly concerned the impact any changes to the current framework may have on employment and business growth within these regional hubs. As any change, particularly extending trading hours, is likely to have a severe, negative and direct impact on regional communities and small business owners, already struggling to survive.

This issue is one that has raised its head a number of times within the North West region and strikes at the heart of the city of Mount Isa, and other regional towns. Previously those most vocally in support of changes to trading arrangements have been from outside of the community and may not fully appreciate the extent of the negative impacts.

We have 'held the line' against Sunday trading for years now, freeing up the residents to enjoy social events and retain our local economy. To adjust trading hours, particularly to the benefits of major retail stores would threaten this way of life, which I believe permanent residents enjoy, judging by the number of signatures we have collected in previous campaigns against Sunday trading.



When considering this submission I urge the reference group to take into account the following concerns:

- Changes to the current trading hours will threaten the very existence of the smaller suburban convenience stores, pharmacies, butchers, newsagents and florists. Smaller retailers serve residents well out in the suburbs, with their highest turnover on Sundays, the only day the bigger retail stores are closed. These stores cannot compete against large retailers in buying power, and staff costs if they were also to open on a Sunday.
- Social contribution by smaller retailers must also be taken into account, these small stores continue to give a huge amount in sponsorship and support to the sporting and cultural organisations in this city.
- Current trading hours operating within the Mount Isa electorate fosters sufficient time off for the community, allowing for social growth.
- There is no public transport in many regional towns, particularly on a Sunday, so the lack of access to the city centre for some community members is still a concern. Vulnerable individuals such as the elderly and the physically disadvantaged would be indirectly impacted by the closure of these smaller outlets, leaving the only alternative is to travel at their own expense to access basic goods.
- Because of the mining downturn the population in Mount Isa is already in decline leading to the closure of a number of small businesses. Any framework change that could cause the closure of a single business would be a loss of magnified proportions to that in urban areas. A loss of a single family run business disadvantages the community not only in terms of jobs, but in terms of leadership in sport and cultural organisations and a loss in sponsorship.
- Larger retailers who would benefit from the proposed changes to trading hours do not necessarily have a high retail presence in rural and remote Queensland. As such, the intent of this proposal and the possible promulgation of said legislation is of benefit to larger more populated areas.

I urge the reference group to make no changes to the current arrangements relating to trading hours for large retailers, as the deregulation of shop trading hours in Queensland would be detrimental to the social and economic fabric of the Mount Isa, and other rural, communities. As specified by the current Trading Hours Act the needs of local industry, the public interest, consumers' interest, and business interest (whether small, medium or large), the view of any local Government and other matters should all be considered. These considerations, unique from community to community simply cannot take place through sweeping legislative changes.

I am in firm support of retaining restrictions for non-exempt shops based on geographical location and/or types of goods sold in the shop. A deregulated model such as the one that exists within New South Wales, Victoria and Tasmania would simply not work for regional Queensland. While profit should be taken into account we must establish a way to gauge the potential impact a new framework may have on the community.

Yours sincerely,



Robbie Katter
Member for Mount Isa