



Submission by  
**United Voice, Industrial Union of Employees, Queensland**

To

Mr John Mickel  
Committee Chair  
Review of the Trading (Allowable Hours) Act 1990



United Voice is a union representing over 30,000 Queensland workers in a diverse range of industries, including Paramedics, Health, Education, Manufacturing, Facilities Management, Tourism and Hospitality.

We recognise that there is a balance that needs to be met between the needs of our members (and other members of the community) to have access to a range of retailers and the needs of workers engaged within the retail sector to enjoy time with their own families.

We welcome the opportunity to contribute to the discussion of retail trading hours in Queensland.

Subject to some reservations, United Voice supports the liberalisation of retail trading hours within a regulated uniform state wide trading hours regime.

It is a simple fact that the nature of work, and as such the nature of workers lives, has continued to evolve rapidly over the past decade.

For many of our members shift work has been a fact of life for their entire working lives, however increasingly even those in more traditional work arrangements have shifted from a standard 9 to 5, Monday to Friday pattern into a far more complex array of working hours.

With the increasing complexity and sophistication of the working week, along with increasingly complex household work arrangements, it is our belief that reform that supports the needs of working people to perform basic household tasks is necessary.



## **Supermarkets and Grocery Stores**

In terms of basic supermarket shopping the current regulatory regime compels workers who work unsociable hours to make use of independent or convenience stores where often prices are significantly higher and the range of products more limited.

It is clear that there has been a significant blurring of the lines between the categories of shop in the current regulatory environment, while in many cases that has been caused through a simple changing of product offering and consumer expectation, we are concerned that the present regulatory regime encourages sophisticated corporate arrangements to avoid regulation.

It is our view that a liberalisation of shop trading hours would be of direct economic benefit to those workers, and have a positive impact on their household budget. Particularly if we consider the changing ways in which people expect to shop.

## **Other Stores**

The discussion of retail trading hours, however, extends beyond what might be considered traditional retail, and includes car, boat and caravan sales.

We believe that the purchase of a car, boat or caravan is typically a major purchase in most households, and that restrictions on Sunday trading (in particular) limit the capacity of families to jointly engage in those purchases.

We are particularly cognisant of the limited access many people that work in regimented jobs have to making such purchases during the working week due to a lack of flexibility inherent in their workplaces.



We also note the absurdity that while the hours where it is allowable to sell a motor vehicle are tightly regulated, the sale of the component parts to build such a vehicle is exempt from regulation.

The current exempted shop list is anachronistic, and fails to keep up with the changes in retail trade since it was initially developed – what were once obviously small stores are now big-box traders.

We believe that it is appropriate that there be a uniform defined retail trading window that is agnostic to the particular type of store, product sold, staffing arrangement or location, with a limited list of exemptions.

### **Reservations**

While we are generally supportive of an increase to trading hours and a more rational approach to their regulation, we seek to qualify that support on a number of grounds.

### **Penalty Rates/Overtime**

We can only support the extension of trading hours where there are explicit penalty/overtime rates that are payable to retail workers working unsociable or extended hours.

It is reasonable that there is a cost to business and the broader community in terms of appropriately remunerating workers who provide greater convenience at unsociable times.

### **Worker Safety**

Expanded trading hours (particularly at night) present particular issues for personal safety for workers. While the risk of violence against workers during shift is mitigated



in larger stores by the presence of a greater number of staff, our experience with our shopping centre cleaner membership points to other specific issues that should properly be considered.

While it is outside of the scope of the terms of reference, we have particular concerns about worker safety in large shopping centre car parks where increasingly staff parking is provided on the fringe of large suburban shopping centres.

We believe that adequate provision of safe, well lit, and appropriately located parking should be considered by employers who might seek to take advantage of a more liberalised trading hours regime.

### **Other Issues**

We believe that government should consider the need for appropriate and safe public transport options to cater not just for shoppers, but retail workers if there was to be a change in retail trading arrangements.

It appears likely that if there was an extension of trading hours that often those extended or new shifts would be undertaken by young, casually engaged workers, and that there is a responsibility to ensure that there are adequate safe and affordable options for those workers to travel to and from work.