



SPEECH

CRAIG EMERSON

Member for Rankin

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PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Small Business

[Dr EMERSON](#) (Rankin) (1.02 p.m.)—The inspiration for this private member's motion appears to be an adjournment debate contribution made by the member for Gilmore, who is also the mover of this motion. There has been a degree of controversy in the last few days about the naming of businesses. I note, for example, that the Deputy Leader of the Opposition has been criticised for doing so, yet she made it clear in her statement that 'it is not really about one place'. She went on to say, 'I certainly don't blame small business.'

While we are on that subject, I refer to an adjournment debate contribution by the member for Gilmore in which she did far more than name a particular business. She said:

I have been given certain information that suggests that the principals of the franchisors of Bakers Delight engaged in practices that I can only describe as not only dishonest but possibly criminal.

She went on to say that 'there may have been breaches of criminal law'. She spoke of the 'orchestrated robbery' of a person's business by the franchisors of Bakers Delight. Further, she went on to say:

It is totally unacceptable that any small business can be subjected to intimidation, commercial or criminal, without recourse to some form of effective protection. It is totally unacceptable that an organisation that engages in practices such as these is allowed to continue trading.

She went on to say that 'this government must intervene on behalf of all small businesses'. I do not think you can get a more blatant example of a government member naming businesses and, in fact, accusing them of possible criminal behaviour.

The member who moved this motion has called on the government to intervene. The government has been in office for 11 years, and we learn in the media that the government is finally going to bring forward some amendments to section 46 of the Trade Practices Act. We will have a look at those amendments, but if the member for Gilmore is making criticisms, surely it is the case that she is making criticisms of her own government, after 11 years. And those criticisms are valid.

Let us understand what this motion is all about. It is about criticising the Howard government for its sloth in not dealing properly with pro-competitive legislation to ensure that there is proper competition amongst big businesses, small businesses and those that are in between big and small businesses. So let

us not hear anything more about how terrible it is to name a business. Certainly, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition did not accuse anyone of criminality, of orchestrated robbery or of intimidation. This is extraordinary.

The fact is that this government has had a full 11 years in which to do the work that the member, here today in the parliament, is calling upon the government to do. I am very pleased to be able to support this motion. I support the small business community in our country. Almost two million people are small business owners and operators; 750,000 of them employ other people in their businesses and 1.1 million are non-employing small businesses, many of them independent contractors. Certainly, it is a relevant consideration that the Labor leader, Mr Rudd, has appointed a shadow minister for independent contractors, whereas no such government minister exists.

Labor has put forward a range of measures that would make life for small business much easier, one of the most striking of which is BAS Easy. Again, it is extraordinary that the previous speaker, the member for Mitchell, who has left the chamber, said in a recent debate that he would not support BAS Easy—a way of making the GST bookkeeping requirements for small business so much easier. It is an option; it is not obligatory. But if the government was fair dinkum about supporting small business, it would deal with the No. 1 small business paperwork burden—that is, the GST.

I welcome the private member's motion, but let us understand the inspiration behind it—the member's discontent with the Howard's government's inaction on competition policy. We look forward to getting the detail of the legislation. But, in the meantime, if the member for Gilmore has a complaint to make, she is obviously making it about her own government.