

Ms COLLINS (3.22 pm)—My question is to the Minister for Small Business, Independent Contractors and the Service Economy. How is the government supporting small business now and into the future through the Nation Building and Jobs Plan?

Dr EMERSON—I thank the member for Franklin for her question and her strong interest in the small business community in Tasmania. The Rudd government has had small business firmly in mind in designing its responses to the global financial crisis. The payments under the Nation Building and Jobs Plan, which will begin to flow to households this week, will quickly boost consumption and they will support small business in every community around the country. Let us be clear about this. Without these payments, things would be even tougher for small businesses. They would be under more pressure to cut their staff or reduce their hours. It is a pity that the opposition does not accept these basic economic facts. It is a great pity that the opposition voted against the Nation Building and Jobs Plan.

But I am pleased to advise the House that the business community do clearly support the Nation Building and Jobs Plan, and their response has been overwhelmingly positive. I will just take a selection of two at the responses at the moment. The Council of Small Business of Australia said that it was a confidence boost for small business and that it would provide benefit to many small businesses and to the communities in which they live and operate. The Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Western Australia describes it as a timely shot in the arm for small business.

These payments are a critical and responsible measure to support jobs and growth until the much larger nation-building elements of our plan kick in—our investments in schools, roads and housing. Let us have a look at those. Australia's 1.3 million tradies, our independent contractors, will be the big beneficiaries of these infrastructure investments,

which represent more than two-thirds of the spending under the Nation Building and Jobs Plan. For example, tradies will be given work in the \$14.7 billion program of Building the Education Revolution in every Australian school. Tradies will be installing insulation in 2.7 million Australian homes. Tradies will be engaged in the construction of 20,000 social and Defence Housing dwellings, and tradies will be working on improvements to the community infrastructure and upgrading the nation's roads with \$890 million to be spent under this plan.

Tradies will also join other small businesses in benefiting from our 30 per cent small business and general tax break, and that will provide a further stimulus to the economy—again, a point that is rejected by the opposition but supported by business organisations around the country. The NSW Business Chamber has described the tax break in these terms:

NSW businesses will particularly welcome the \$2.7 billion package of tax breaks for business.

Again, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Western Australia said:

CCCI believes the \$2.7 billion tax bonus is an important and timely investment in the lifeblood of the Australian economy small business.

This is the tax break that the coalition voted against. The Australian Industry Group said:

In particular, business welcomes the \$2.7 billion investment incentive ...

The Combined Small Business Alliance of Western Australia said, with reference to the \$42 billion economic stimulus measures:

... in particular the small business and general business tax breaks. You and your government are to be commended for your initiative and your endeavour to address the nation's dire economic circumstances.

Master Builders Australia said:

The building industry is predominantly made up of small businesses which should benefit from the government's \$2.7 billion small business and general tax break.

The National Farmers Federation said:

Further, the \$2.7 billion tax break for small businesses will be greatly appreciated by those small family owned farms.

Finally, the Pharmacy Guild of Australia—

Mr Ciobo—Mr Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I am just wondering if he is going to mention Restaurant and Catering Australia, who say that their laws will destroy over 2½ thousand jobs.

The SPEAKER—The member for Moncrieff will leave the chamber for one hour. That is not a point of order.

The member for Moncrieff then left the chamber.

Dr EMERSON—Indeed, Restaurant and Catering Australia did welcome the \$2.7 billion tax break for small business which the coalition opposed and voted against. The Pharmacy Guild said that it welcomes the tax break for small business and that the measures come at the right time to encourage community pharmacies to make productive investments.

We are now moving towards the end of question time, and I notice that generally there is a question from the coalition when a survey of consumer sentiment comes out, but I notice that we did not get one today. There is a pretty good reason for that: the survey of consumer sentiment was released not long before question time and it says, in part, that on the face of this there is a surprisingly good result. It goes on to say that it may be that the index is now finding a base. Importantly, the Westpac Consumer Survey says the big surprise came with the outlook for the economy over the next five years, which surged by 15.2 per cent. This could only be interpreted as a strong vote of confidence that current policies are providing a strong foundation in the longer term—current policies that the coalition voted against and continues to campaign against. There is Bill Evans of Westpac saying that this is a very good result and that we are doing the right thing by the

Australian economy with this Nation Building and Jobs Plan. The tragedy of the situation is that the only jobs that those opposite care about are their own.