

SMALL BUSINESS — SHOPLIFTING

**602. Mrs A.K. HAYDEN to the Minister for Small Business:**

Given the impact of shoplifting, as outlined in *The West Australian* today by Vince Garreffa, owner of Mondo's butcher, and a string of small retail businesses that have been plagued by out-of-control shoplifting, what protective action is the minister taking to stop these attacks on our struggling small retail businesses?

**Mr P. PAPALIA replied:**

That is an interesting angle. I would normally expect that type of question to be properly addressed to the Minister for Police or perhaps the Attorney General—I do not know. There is a remote link to small business. I know that small businesses are part of the community and are subject to crime in much the same way as is every other sector of the community. What I am doing is promoting small business in Western Australia. I am taking action to protect small businesses from the challenges that they confronted under the previous government. Members opposite would be very familiar with—they might have read about it at the time, but they did not do anything about it—the damage inflicted on subcontractors across Western Australia when they were in government. Construction contractors with government funding caused small businesses to go bankrupt and people lost their houses and their marriages broke down, and, sadly, some people ultimately took their own lives through despair because the ministers of the day said that there was nothing they could do to assist them.

We have introduced legislation to Parliament—I look forward to the opposition supporting and engaging on that bit of legislation—to give the Small Business Development Corporation and the Small Business Commissioner far more expansive powers to assist small businesses than was the case under the previous government. They already assist small businesses in all manner of endeavours. They provide mentoring and advice and free legal services. That is something that could assist the businesses mentioned in the bizarre question the member asked me. That aside, I am very proud of the fact that we have assisted small businesses through the continuation of the liberalisation of liquor licensing. We heard about *Le Rebelle* earlier. That has resulted from the removal of a lot of red tape that existed under the previous government that prevented small businesses from growing and operating.

We are massively growing the number of visitors to Western Australia. They are coming into the city, which I am very proud of and defend and promote around the world. I am appalled at the negative attacks on the beautiful City of Perth by those opposite, intending to drive down visitor numbers to the centre of the city and intending to hurt small businesses. I think that is shameful behaviour. I am appalled by it, and I will defend small businesses right across the state but particularly in the centre of the beautiful City of Perth. In the 12 months to 2019, our state has attracted more visitors than ever before. We are getting into our restaurants, bars, cafes and hotels and getting out to the regions and tourism businesses and feeding the opportunity for small businesses to grow their profits and employ more people and grow jobs.