



National Retail Association

MEDIA STATEMENT

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Retailers blast public holiday ‘double dip’

The National Retail Association has blasted the Bligh Government’s decision to create extra public holidays next year, saying neither the service sector nor the state budget could afford such largess.

NRA executive director Gary Black said the decision to gazette two holidays for the Queen’s Birthday – in June and October – would harm seven day trading sectors such as retail and tourism which were already in crisis mode because of falling demand and rising costs of operation.

He also accused the Government of over-riding the industrial relations system by signalling it will grant additional holidays when Christmas, Boxing Day or New Year’s Day fall on a weekend.

“Employers and their staff make arrangements through Fair Work Australia for adequate compensation when workers are required to work on Christmas Day,” Mr Black said.

“By gazetting a second Christmas or Boxing Day holiday, the Government forces employers to pay those costs twice. It effectively thumbs its nose at the FWA process and takes it upon itself to interfere in those arrangements.

“Adding an extra Queen’s birthday holiday next year will add to the cost impost on businesses that open their doors every day of the week. These retail businesses are already struggling, and can scarce afford to pay more penalty rates next year.

“All Queenslanders should also be concerned about the impact of this measure on the state budget, which will also need to fund additional cash for wages of public servants required to work both days.”

Mr Black said governments needed to shift away from the old-fashion view of the service sector as a nine-to-five, Monday-to-Friday affair.

“People expect to be able to shop for essential supplies on public holidays – even on Christmas Day – and so employers must open and pay their staff the appropriate penalty rates.

“By double-dipping to create more public holidays simply because Christmas or Boxing Day is on a weekend, the Government shows itself to be completely out of touch with the needs of employers and the realities of the modern economy.”

Gary Black is available for media interviews on 0413 046 614