

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **LABOR BACKFLIP ON EASTER TRADING**

The Bracks Government's latest amendments to shop trading hours in Victoria create new anomalies and confusion for retailers and their staff and customers.

The proposed changes discriminate against large retail employers and their staff and represent a knee-jerk response to the controversy the Bracks Government generated with its legislation to close shops on Easter Sunday.

The changes follow criticism and lobbying by the Liberal Party, the Australian Retailers Association Victorian and the Victorian Employers Chamber of Commerce and Industry but have not been part of any formal consultation process.

Presumably the Small Business Minister has arbitrarily decided which retailers can open and which retailers must close on Easter Sunday, Good Friday, Christmas Day and the morning of Anzac Day.

The legislation is another majestic backflip by the Bracks Government but it remains an inadequate response to the concerns of the retail industry and consumers about the Easter Sunday shutdown rushed through Parliament for Easter 2003.

Some small businesses such as cafes, restaurants, chemists and service stations will now be permitted to open on the four designated holidays.

Businesses with less than 20 employees in a single shop and not more than 100 staff in the total employment of a company will also be able to open under the proposed legislative changes.

But the proposed changes leave many shops in the City of Melbourne closed on Easter Sunday in a peak tourist period and chain hardware stores closed when homeowners traditionally undertake renovation projects.

Easter Sunday should have been restored as an unrestricted trading day.

Under Labor's convoluted changes, more retailers will be permitted to open than were able to in Labor's flawed legislation earlier this year.

But for some reason known only to the Small Business Minister, it is all right for small retailers to open but not large retailers selling the same goods.

To introduce these changes under the guise of giving employees a day off for "family time" is nonsense because small business employees may be forced to work – while employees of large retail stores have the day off.

Nothing has changed – Labor's meddling with public holiday trading in Victoria has resulted in a confused, unjust system full of inconsistency and anomalies.

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