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### **O'Brien drags his feet on the appointment of WA Small Business Commissioner**

The Barnett Government must introduce legislation to appoint a Small Business Commissioner in the first week of Parliament, Shadow Commerce and Small Business Minister Ljiljana Ravlich said today.

Ms Ravlich said it had been more than six months since the Barnett Government committed to appoint a Small Business Commissioner.

"The Barnett Government gave a commitment to appoint a commissioner in June last year after an in-principal agreement was struck between the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition on retail trading hours reform," she said.

"A key element of the negotiations was the appointment of a Small Business Commissioner to provide a low-cost, non-litigious means of resolving disputes between landlords and tenants in retail shopping centres, including negotiating lease and rent reviews.

"In August last year, the then Commerce Minister Bill Marmion told Parliament legislation would be introduced *'as soon as practicable'*.

"Late night trading started on November 1 and yet there is still no sign of the legislation."

Ms Ravlich said in 2009-10 the Small Business Development Corporation assisted 2325 clients with information and guidance on commercial tenancy issues and assisted 121 clients in making applications to the State Administrative Tribunal.

"There is clearly a real need out there for a Commissioner to help oversee these issues and ensure small businesses are treated fairly," she said.

"A commissioner is needed to intervene in situations where tenants' rights have been breached.

"We continue to see disputes between tenants and landlords that can only be resolved with expensive legal action, which most small business operators cannot afford."

Ms Ravlich said the small business sector had a right to know when the Small Business Commissioner would be appointed.

"Small businesses need to know if the Commissioner will be an independent statutory officer with powers to intervene in disputes and make determinations on them," she said.

"Mr O'Brien must reveal what resources will be allocated to the Commissioner and whether it will be included the forthcoming budget.

"Enough is enough. Small businesses cannot continue to wait while Mr O'Brien sits on his hands."

**Media contact: Ljiljana Ravlich 0400 515 456**

**LJILJANNA RAVLICH MLC  
SHADOW MINISTER FOR COMMERCE AND SMALL BUSINESS; GOVERNMENT  
ACCOUNTABILITY; TOURISM; TRAINING**