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Labor votes to give small business a fair go

The Liberal Government was defeated three times in Parliament on Tuesday after Labor joined forces with the National Party and the Greens to give small businesses in WA a fair go.

Labor Leader Eric Ripper said the Barnett Government was defeated in the Legislative Council on Tuesday night over the retail trading legislation.

“Once again, Premier Colin Barnett has been unable to convince his National Party Cabinet colleagues to vote in support of a Government bill,” he said.

Mr Ripper said amendments to the Commercial Tenancy (Retail Shops) Agreements Amendment Bill 2011, supported by a strong majority of the Upper House, meant small and large businesses will now be treated the same when it comes to retail shop leases.

“Under the Barnett Government’s proposal, shopping centre stores bigger than 1000sqm would not have to release data about how much rent, outgoings and other levies they pay, while smaller shops would,” he said.

“With the changes, a tenant valuer or a tenant’s representative will be able to disclose information about who pays what to their tenants without the risk of being sued.

“Small businesses will now be able to see if bigger businesses in the same shopping complex are also paying their fair share; it provides a level playing field for businesses of all sizes to be able to negotiate their lease agreements.

“It will also mean small businesses can make more informed business decisions about the shopping centres they are in or want to go to.”

Shadow Commerce Minister Ljiljana Ravlich said the amendments effectively established the lease register that Labor had been continually asking for, but was not included in the Barnett Government’s legislation.

“This goes even further because it will provide information not only on current rental rates but also on incentives, lease variations and outgoings,” she said.

“It gives transparency and people can see who pays what.

“Prospective new tenants need to be able to compare costs to be able to make proper business assessments and informed business decisions.

“This is a major departure from the past and will be most welcome by the small business sector that has been divided and conquered for way too long.”

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