

Push against supermarket Sunday trade

MISSION Beach residents have made a final bid to ensure their Woolworths supermarket maintains a day of rest.

A petition bearing 900 signatures and opposing the proposed Sunday trading hours was presented to Cassowary Coast Regional Council on Thursday.

Campaigner Jennifer Jones, who owns a small supermarket in Mission Beach, said the increased trading hours would negatively impact local businesses.

"The small businesses in the villages rely on foot flow," she said.

But a Woolworths spokesman said the application was in response to customer demand.

"It's something that's quite normal throughout many states," he said.

"Many people like to shop outside peak times when it's quieter; where we see customer demand, we try to meet it. We're seeing our store being busy and we are attracting more people into Mission Beach — people who otherwise might have driven to Innisfail to do their shopping. That's got to have a knock-on effect for other businesses in Mission Beach."

An industrial court hearing in two weeks will determine whether an

application by Woolworths to trade on Sundays is successful.

Division 3 Councillor Jennifer Downs said Woolworths' introduction into Mission Beach had already cost jobs and more were at risk.

"Severe job losses have occurred in our community and I wouldn't like to see that continue," she said.

Cr Downs received applause from the full public gallery when she told the meeting it was her view that Woolworths should not trade on Sundays. She added that the "village and market feel" of Mission Beach's areas on weekends was important to the town's identity.

The Woolworths spokesman said local employment had been boosted by the supermarket.

"We employ 75 people at the moment and some of them came from casual hospitality employment that didn't have things like sick pay, into full-time positions," the spokesman said.

Mayor Bill Shannon was sympathetic to the residents' campaign.

Councillors will decide at the next general meeting — in Cardwell on November 26 — whether to make a submission to the hearing objecting to the increased trading hours.