



Speech by

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GAMING MACHINE TURNOVER

Mr BRISKEY (Cleveland—ALP) (11 p.m.): There has been much distortion and misinformation surrounding recently released gaming machine turnover figures in Queensland. Funnily enough, the release of this misinformation has coincided with the public hearings held in Brisbane by the Commonwealth Productivity Commission as part of the Inquiry into Australia's Gambling Industries. It is unfortunate that such scare tactics have come into play at a time when it is essential to construct an accurate and timely picture of gambling and its impacts in this State.

It seems that the foundation of this misinformation lies in the incorrect use of the term "gaming machine turnover". To clarify this issue, allow me to explain the true meaning of the term. "Gaming machine turnover" is used to describe performance of gaming machines. The situation has arisen where this figure has been confused with "player expenditure", which is the amount bet by each player. There are legislative requirements which ensure that out of each dollar spent on playing gaming machines 85c is returned to players either as coins or credits. It is then the choice of the player to stop playing and take the money accumulated or replay the coins or credits. This has resulted in gross overstatements as to the amount gambled and lost by Queenslanders who play gaming machines at clubs and hotels.

In fact, the figures represented in the media in the past few days have overstated the amount spent on gaming machines by a factor of 6.67. For example, in Logan, where the average gaming machine turnover was recently quoted as being \$1,855 per adult per year, the actual average amount spent on gaming machines is \$278 per adult per year. This works out to be an amount of about \$5 per person per week—well below the cost of a movie ticket.

To undertake a similar analysis of the Mount Isa region, which currently has the highest rates of gaming machine turnover in the State, the following situation exists. Gaming machine turnover per capita is \$3,774, while actual expenditure per adult per annum was \$566. This works out at \$10.80 per adult per week. The misuse of information grossly exaggerates spending and serves as a scare tactic. It is important to stress that an accurate picture of the extent of gambling—and the positive and negative impacts—is developed.

It is with this in mind that I wish to point out that this Government also recognises that for some people gambling can have negative impacts. There are several initiatives in place to help ensure that the negative impacts are clearly identified and that initiatives are put in place to address them. For instance, it should be noted that many Queensland gaming Acts contain specific provisions which are designed to reduce the negative impacts of gambling on the community. These provisions include controls in respect of advertising and promotion of lawful gaming activities, prohibition on the participation of minors in all commercial forms of gaming, and specific controls over locations of play.

In addition, the Gaming Machine Act 1991 provides that a gaming machine licensee who suspects the wellbeing of a person or that person's family is at risk must suspend that person from participating in gaming activities at that venue for a period of one month. This is intended to provide a circuit breaker for a person who may be considered to be at risk of being adversely affected by gambling.

I wish also to point out that moneys are made available from the Gaming Machine Community Benefit Fund, the Charities and Rehabilitation Fund and the Casino Community Benefit Funds to help promote responsible gambling in the community. In the 1997-98 financial year, amounts totalling \$43.04m were paid into these funds. More precisely, \$13.70m was paid to the Gaming Machine Community Benefit Fund, \$24.87m to the Charities and Rehabilitation Fund, and \$4.47m to the Casino Community Benefit Funds. Through the application of funds from the Charities and Rehabilitation Fund, the Department of Families, Youth and Community Care monitors the social impact of the gaming industry on individuals, families and the community. It is such funding which enables the department to undertake research into the causes and consequences of addictive gambling and work with industry in the development of community awareness strategies and provide appropriate services for people with gambling addictions.

Another strategy put in place to ensure that an appropriate balance between the provision of gambling activities and appropriate harm minimisation initiatives has been the creation of the Responsible Gambling Advisory Committee, which consists of representatives from problem gambling care providers, gaming and wagering operators and the Government, through the Department of Families, Youth and Community Care and the Queensland Office of Gaming Regulation.

The primary objective of this committee is, through a cooperative approach, to develop a strategy to minimise the negative impacts of gambling on the community of Queensland. The committee also aims to facilitate a unified Government and industry approach to addressing the issue of problem gambling and develop a harm minimisation strategy for all gambling activities in Queensland.

A significant step towards achieving these goals has been the establishment of a 24-hour problem gambling crisis counselling and referral service in Queensland to provide assistance to those adversely affected by gambling or at risk from being adversely affected. This service is currently being trialled in Mount Isa, Cairns and Rockhampton. The Gaming Machine Community Benefit Fund and the Casino Community Benefit Fund both provide grants to worthwhile community projects. Since the introduction of gaming machines in Queensland——

Time expired.
