



Speech by

Dr DAVID WATSON

MEMBER FOR MOGGILL

Hansard 8 June 1999

CHARITABLE AND NON-PROFIT GAMING BILL

Dr WATSON (Moggill—LP) (Leader of the Liberal Party) (2.54 p.m.): As I indicated previously to the Treasurer, the Opposition will be supporting the Charitable and Non-Profit Gaming Bill. In some respects, this is the third tranche of some things that began when I was the Parliamentary Secretary.

Mr Hamill: A bit like the IMF.

Dr WATSON: Yes, it sounds like the IMF.

During the review of gaming, a number of issues arose that were not part of the review, one of which was the broader issue of liquor licensing and the position of hotels, which was to be addressed under a different portfolio. Internet gaming was another issue that was starting to surface and which I thought the Government at the time had to address. However, it was not going to be addressed in the white paper. The third issue that arose from time to time was that of charitable and non-profit gaming.

As an aside, I point out that over the weekend I visited the CNet news site on the Internet. In respect of a Bill being introduced into the United States Congress, I noted some favourable comments about Australia's approach to Internet gaming legislation. As somebody who at the early stages had a fair bit to do with making sure that we went down the right track, it was interesting—

Mr Hamill: Did you email them and tell them?

Dr WATSON: I probably could have told the legislators that. One comment concerned how the gaming industry viewed our laws favourably; however, that was directed against the individual introducing the legislation into the US Congress.

As I said, the third issue that we did not address was the charitable and non-profit gaming area. That issue was addressed later by the Government, in particular through the discussion paper on this area released in April 1998. Currently, in respect of non-charitable gaming the regulatory regime essentially addresses two basic areas—exempt art unions and non-exempt art unions. The proposal put forward in a discussion paper—and I understand it was well received—was to break up the charitable gaming area into three areas: small raffles; art unions, excluding small raffles; and more broadly defined art unions. The main feature was a rationalisation based on the amount of money involved in each of those areas. For example, in respect of small raffles involving less than \$2,000 in proceeds per game, the regulatory regime and the costs associated with it would be lessened. It was only when we moved to the more involved games where a larger amount of money was involved that the paper suggested the imposition of a stronger regulatory regime.

In looking at the Bill and the second-reading speech, I was pleased that, for all practical purposes, the proposed regulatory regime in that April 1998 paper has been taken up and is being introduced in this Bill. The difference is a slight increase in the categorisation. I think a good change was that made in respect of category 4 games, commonly known as trade promotions and which are referred to in the Bill as "promotional games". It is pleasing to see that in essence the regulatory regime proposed under the coalition Government—and my successor as Parliamentary Secretary and also the then Treasurer had a fair bit to do with it—has been taken up. I think it will lead to lower costs for smaller organisations and a more rational regulatory regime. That streamlining will be of benefit to not only smaller organisations but also larger art union organisations, and that will be of benefit to the community as a whole.

Australians and Queenslanders do enjoy their bets in these areas, whether it be lucky envelopes, art unions or things like that. They are a great source of fundraising for a great many charitable organisations and I guess form a very essential part of our social structure. Anything that the Government can do to make that more palatable from the viewpoint of those organisations and make the costs and, therefore, the net returns to these organisations better is something that we should all support. In that spirit, we have great pleasure in supporting the Bill.
