



Speech by

**Dr DAVID WATSON**

**MEMBER FOR MOGGILL**

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Hansard 17 August 1999

### **CENSURE OF MEMBER FOR IPSWICH**

**Dr WATSON** (Moggill—LP) (Leader of the Liberal Party) (6.10 p.m.): I second the motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition to censure the member for Ipswich in his role as Treasurer. I do so for one very simple reason, that is, that the Treasurer failed in one of his principal responsibilities, which is to protect the excellent name Queensland has in the area of gaming regulation.

When he was Deputy Premier, the former member for Ipswich, Sir Llew Edwards, whom Mr Hamill replaced in 1983, actually established the standards by which gaming regulation ought to be viewed in this State. If I recall correctly, it was under Sir Llew Edwards that the original legislation with respect to Jupiters and the control of gaming and casinos was actually introduced. That has been recognised around Australia as being the epitome of probity and integrity in regulation.

**Mr Hamill:** He would know, wouldn't he?

**Dr WATSON:** He introduced it. It seems to me that through the years it has been supported by both sides of the House. I give credit to the previous Labor Treasurer, the former member for Cairns. When he introduced gaming machines to Queensland he also attempted to make sure that the regulation of gaming machines in Queensland was of the highest standard.

**Mr Elder:** What did you do to improve it?

**Dr WATSON:** I take the interjection of the Deputy Premier. We did precisely the same kind of thing when we were in Government. We maintained the standards. We ensured that the highest standards of probity applied in relation to the introduction of keno. The toughest standards in terms of regulation, probity and integrity were applied in that area. When we introduced operators into the system, we ensured that the operators had to meet the highest standards of integrity and probity. They were the toughest set of regulations to be introduced in this country.

The important thing about that is that when we introduced operators we gave everyone the same start. We allowed everyone to apply and we issued them at the same time. We did not stop there—we allowed other people to apply later on—but no-one got a head start. That is a significant difference between what we did and what has happened in this situation.

At that time I was the Parliamentary Secretary. I had just become Minister for Public Works at the time of the ministerial council on gaming. We in Government accepted the national model on gaming. Most importantly, we indicated to the other States that we were going to ensure that we had a regulatory system in interactive gaming which was consistent with the high standards that had been set with the original casino legislation, with the introduction of the gaming machine legislation by the Government of which the Minister was a part—consistent with the introduction of operators, consistent with the introduction of keno and the area with the highest integrity in this country.

With the stroke of a pen the member for Ipswich has undermined Queensland's outstanding international reputation. In one fell swoop he has introduced other individuals into the process, which other gaming Acts around the world have been fighting for years. The major issue tonight is that the member for Ipswich has failed to maintain Queensland's outstanding record.

Time expired.

**Hon. P. D. BEATTIE** (Brisbane Central— ALP) (Premier) (6.15 p.m.): I move the following amendment—

"Remove all the words after 'That this House' and insert—

'congratulates the Beattie Government for establishing new benchmarks for integrity in the way in which it has handled criticism of the awarding of an interactive gambling licence, including:

the Premier and Treasurer calling immediately for an investigation of the process by the Auditor-General, even though there had been no allegation of illegality or impropriety;

the guarantee that, in complete contrast to the coalition Government's interference with the CJC investigation of the secret memorandum of understanding, the Auditor-General and the CJC will be able to operate in complete freedom and with every cooperation from the Government;

the action of the Treasurer in standing aside while investigations are undertaken into his role in the granting of the licence under the terms of the coalition Government's Interactive Gambling (Player Protection) Amendment Act; and

the urgent action being taken by the Government to ensure that three members of the Labor Party involved in public life do not benefit from their positions as minor shareholders in a company which has an interest in the company awarded the licence.'

We are also taking out the company itself. The motion moved by the Opposition tonight is nothing more than a cheap political stunt. Where is this matter being dealt with appropriately? It is being dealt with appropriately by the Auditor-General. The Auditor-General has in fact decided to carry out an investigation. We requested him to do so, but he is doing it and he has broadened it to consider all matters that he believes appropriate.

Why are we seeking tonight to pre-empt the proper independent inquiry by the Auditor-General? Because this is nothing more than a cheap political stunt. Let Queenslanders be aware of it. The Leader of the Opposition sought to bully the CJC into having an inquiry. He sought to intimidate it about having it in public, even though he as Premier had supported laws which meant those inquiries were private, subject to certain circumstances.

The hypocrisy and double standards go on. The Opposition Leader wanted a CJC inquiry. He wanted an independent inquiry. He got one, but is he prepared to wait for the answer? No. He wants to come in here and play political games and he wants to carry on with simple, cheap stunts and political games which are, in my view, unhelpful to the reputation of this Parliament in the community.

Let us be very clear about this: today's contribution by the Opposition has seen it deliberately misrepresent the relevant legislation. It has deliberately misrepresented the probity rules. It has deliberately misrepresented sections 44 and 48. It has not told one truth since this debate started today. The community expects better standards. It expects independent inquiries to be able to get on with their job without intimidation.

Honourable members should compare our behaviour with that of the Borbidge/Sheldon Government when it set out to destroy inquiries. Here we have a censure motion being moved by a man who would not stand aside when he was the subject of a CJC inquiry. Is that hypocrisy? You bet it is! We have a situation here where this motion is being supported by Denver Beanland, the former Attorney-General, who, for over 700 days, continued to serve notwithstanding that he did not have the confidence of this House. The hypocrisy is extraordinary. The audacity is almost breathless.

It is wrong, it is improper and it is unethical to come into this House and seek to censure the Treasurer before the Auditor-General has reported. It is unethical and it is improper. They have no standards in the Opposition—none at all. I say to the people of Queensland: be wary. The Opposition will lie. They will distort. They will tell untruths. They will do everything they possibly can at the price of one thing—the god of simple political expediency. They will abuse that god of political expediency for cheap gain. That is why the amendment that I have moved is the only sensible, constructive amendment, because it acknowledges that this Government did everything possible to put it right—to fix it. But tonight Opposition members even opposed the legislation to fix it. That says it all.

Time expired.

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