



Speech by

**JOHN GOSS**

**MEMBER FOR ASPLEY**

---

Hansard 7 December 1999

### **GAMING MACHINES**

**Mr GOSS** (Aspley—LP) (12.16 a.m.): Many Australians, and probably quite a few members, have bought a Scratch-It, put a bet on a horse or put a dollar into a poker machine at some point in their lives. However, every year, more and more Australians fall victim to what has been described as the social cost of gambling. And from what I have seen, the Beattie Labor Government appears to be turning a blind eye to these problems. Ten years ago, when I first entered Parliament, poker machines were allowed only in Queensland's casinos. Today, around 30,000 poker machines operate throughout the State, and the number of approvals for new machines is on the rise.

In a question on notice to the Treasurer, I was informed that, in the 1998-99 financial year, an additional 7,678 poker machines were approved to operate in Queensland. This figure compares with 3,996 new machines approved between July and October this year. If approvals remain constant for the rest of the financial year, there will be another 8,000 machines operating in Queensland by the end of June. That represents a total of 12,000 new poker machines for this year.

The major concern for Queensland residents is the fact that many of the new poker machines approved for operation will not be located in established clubs and pubs; rather, they will be lining the walls of suburban shopping centres and other venues with a general liquor licence. Since coming to office in June last year, the Beattie Government has paved the way for a massive increase in poker machine applications.

**Mr HAMILL:** I rise to a point of order. The honourable member is misleading the House. This afternoon, we passed legislation to prevent the very thing that the member is talking about.

**Mr GOSS:** For the first time in our history, our State's gaming is now allowed in a range of venues, such as restaurants. In my electorate alone, the number of poker machines has increased significantly over the past few months. Most recently, a former Sizzlers restaurant in a busy shopping centre has been converted to a tavern with 35 poker machines. The tavern is surrounded by banks and ATMs, a busy 24-hour newsagency, fast food outlets and a variety of other shops that attract young people, families and gamblers alike.

The increase in the number of gaming machines combined with their increased accessibility is a major concern to people, and it is of major concern to the viability of local junior sporting clubs that have relied on gaming machine revenue for many years. One junior club in my electorate has seen profits drop by more than \$220,000 in the last year. With less money for clubs, many sporting clubs will have to cut back on the number of teams and coaches and will not be able to afford or upgrade equipment and facilities as they have done in the past. And no doubt there will be a loss of jobs. That fate will no doubt befall many junior sporting clubs.

However, it is not only junior sporting clubs that will suffer. The Productivity Commission, in its recent report into the hidden costs of gambling, estimates that up to 400 people throughout Australia commit suicide each year. Suicide is such a tragic thing and it is a great waste of life. However, the Government does not appear to be doing anything in an effort to curtail the rapid expansion of this problem.

We are still waiting for the Briskey report. It has been promised so many times that it should be renamed "The Never-Ending Story". Mr Beattie and his Government are happy to accept the \$250m

boost to State revenue which is generated by poker machines, but they are quiet with regard to the fact that Queenslanders spend an average of \$700 per capita on gambling every year.

The Licensing Commission reports a flood of applications from people for general liquor licences. When local residents lodge appeals and the matter goes to the Licensing Appeal Tribunal, the residents are totally ignored and the problem recurs. I must say that the Licensing Appeal Tribunal's representative is the rudest person I have ever met at a tribunal or a court.

Recently, Wayne Goss stated that he wished that the Labor Party had never had its poker machine policy. He claimed that he never envisaged that it would be as widespread throughout pubs and clubs where they are too often accessed by people who can least afford to play them.

Time expired.

---