



Speech by

**Mr M. VEIVERS**

**MEMBER FOR SOUTHPORT**

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**GAMING MACHINE AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

**Mr VEIVERS** (Southport—NPA) (5.51 p.m.): This Bill could well be titled the "Anti-TABCorp Bill", and I say that with a bit of relish because we know that TABCorp is the giant Victorian organisation that has shown great interest in targeting Queensland as a new area for its operations and for taking money out of this State. The reason for that is pretty obvious. Gaming machine-type gambling is relatively new to this State. In south-east Queensland, with its ever-growing population, it has proved an exceedingly successful revenue raiser for the club industry.

I do not think that it is an understatement to say that the industry is enjoying boom times. That is evidenced by the massive capital works programs that are being undertaken by clubs throughout the State. In my own electorate of Southport, three clubs in particular have engaged in expansion work worth many, many millions of dollars: the Sharks Football Club—an Australian Rules club—the Southport RSL and, of course, the Southport Workers Club. I happen to be a member of all three clubs, and very proudly so. They are three examples of venues that have either recently completed or are currently completing multimillion-dollar programs. Let me state that those clubs did that work by themselves.

When gaming machines were introduced to Queensland in the early 1990s, legislation allowing their introduction reinforced the proposition that profits from these machines should be ploughed back into the community, and quite rightly so. That has occurred in the form of some pretty amazing improvements in club facilities for members of the general community and the Gaming Machine Benefits Fund.

When the former Government amended the Gaming Machine Act in July 1997 to allow licensed monitoring operators to broaden their activities within club structures by providing services such as linked jackpot sites, I can say quite honestly that it did so with the very best intentions. Unfortunately, the legislative amendments left a chink in the door for these operators to attempt to broaden their role. They saw the opportunity to try to enter into all sorts of arrangements under which they could gain a percentage of gaming machine returns or revenue.

It was never the intention of the former Government that Queensland clubs should become tools for entrepreneurs to make profits. That goes against the whole spirit of the original legislation governing the operation of clubs in this State. The current Government has reiterated this philosophy, and I have to give it credit for that. I believe that the amendments that have been put forward by the Treasurer, particularly the five years' grace for the clubs that are involved in doing business with TABCorp, is a very good idea and one way of getting around the retrospective legislation. However, I have a bit of a problem with the legislation in that some clubs will still need some type of compensation. I hope that the Treasurer will look at those individual clubs—there will not be too many of them—and do the right thing by them.

I have been a strong supporter of clubs in my area and they have given me strong support. I intend to continue supporting them, because I feel that they provide very valuable facilities for the community that they serve. On the other hand, TABCorp is a profit-orientated organisation. It has been floated publicly and its operations in this State would be totally at odds with the charter of our existing clubs. I emphasise that: the operations of TABCorp would be at odds with the charter of our existing clubs.

The Bill before the House seeks to keep these types of people, or entrepreneurs, out of the club industry and, in fact, does so retrospectively. I refer to the points made and the questions asked by the member for Gladstone. I would be interested to hear some of the answers to those questions, because they really get to the heart of what the Government is trying to do. Not often do we on this side of the House say that the Minister is endeavouring to do a good job. I think that this Bill has been very difficult for the Minister, particularly because Surf Life Saving Queensland came out so strongly against it, basically because the surf-lifesaving clubs were going to be hurt by the legislation. However, I see that the Treasurer has taken on board the concerns of the Labrador Australian Rules Football Club in relation to the five years' grace.

**Mr Briskey:** I went to visit them—a very good club.

**Mr VEIVERS:** I am glad that the member came down to my electorate, although he did not inform me that he was coming. That courtesy was not afforded to me. When I was the Minister, I always told the member that I was coming to his electorate. I informed him and then I looked after him. That gave the member the opportunity to see me and ask for all of those sporting facilities that I put into his electorate, if he remembers rightly.

**Mr Briskey:** I thank you for them.

**Mr VEIVERS:** Yes, that is fine. I say to the Treasurer that, in common with most members of this House, I have a personal abhorrence of retrospective legislation. I refer to the Federal retrospective legislation in relation to the taxation system. That certainly put the cat among the pigeons. I know that the legislation caught the bottom of the harbour schemes, but it also caught some honest people.

Not a lot of members of this House would know it, but once we bring in a law in this place, we do not have to pay compensation. I believe that many members of this place would be thinking that, in relation to this legislation, all the clubs that put their hands up would receive some sort of compensation. I have to tell members that that depends on whether or not the Treasurer goes to Cabinet and says, "We had better look after these people and do the right thing." The Treasurer does not have to do that. I want to point that out very clearly. I do not think that some of the Opposition members realise that once retrospective legislation is made law in this House, they have to cop it and cop it sweet.

I am glad that the Treasurer is looking after those surf-lifesaving clubs, because they do a good job. It really was not their fault that they entered into business deals with TABCorp, the giant Victorian organisation. I have to say openly that any time we can stop money going down to Victoria, that is a good thing.

**Mr VEIVERS** (Southport—NPA) (12.17 p.m.), continuing: This morning in the House I delivered petitions on behalf of the Southport RSL, the Southport Sharks Australian Football Club, the Southport Workers Club—a club with which I believe you, Mr Deputy Speaker, were involved a long time ago—and, of course, the surf-lifesaving movement in general. Representatives from that movement on the Gold Coast came to me. I have delivered their petitions.

In yesterday's debate the issue of compensation for some clubs but not others was discussed. The Minister has a five-year plan for some clubs and a two-year plan for others. I hope that there is no opportunity for some clubs to use the legislation through which the Minister will pay compensation to some clubs and not others. I hope that that part of the legislation is very tight, because it would be opening Pandora's box if a precedent were to be set.

We are debating this Bill, yet the public interest test results have not been made public. I am told that they came back on 22 March, but they have not yet been made public. I ask the Minister: does that make matters more difficult? Perhaps we should not be debating this Bill until the results of the public interest test have been released publicly. The Minister can answer my question in his reply to the second-reading debate.

I reiterate that I am not real sweet on retrospective legislation. However, in this case, I think the Government is endeavouring to go around it as best it can. Although most of the surf-lifesaving clubs need to be looked after and this is the way the Minister is doing it, he should ensure that other clubs cannot get on the bandwagon. We all know what it is like. Legislation must be airtight. When we put retrospective legislation through this House, once it has gone through Government House, it becomes the law of the land. There is no going back. There is no compensation unless it is expressly provided for in the Bill and is really airtight. In that way there are no loopholes. We left a loophole but we did not do it on purpose. However, advantage was taken of that loophole. That is what business is all about—getting around legislation.

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