



Speech by

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MEMBER FOR LYTTON

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GAMING MACHINE AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Mr LUCAS (Lytton—ALP) (12.20 p.m.): I rise in support of the Gaming Machine and Other Legislation Amendment Bill introduced by the Honourable the Treasurer. This legislation is part of Labor's continuing and ongoing commitment to a vital club and hotel leisure industry in this State.

It is all too easy to forget the situation that we had in this State prior to the Goss Government's legislation in 1992 when we saw Queensland money going south hand over fist to clubs in New South Wales. We did not have gambling on poker machines in Queensland prior to 1992. Queensland money was going south to pay for facilities and tax revenue in New South Wales. It was not until the progressive Goss Government was elected in 1989 that we were able to introduce legislation that would legalise poker machines in Queensland under strict Government control and supervision.

I have a large number of clubs in my electorate and it is easy to see the tangible benefits that they have received from the legalisation of poker machines in this State. I specifically refer to the Wynnum Manly Rugby League club. I notice that the Minister for Tourism, Sport and Racing is in the House. He was a former player at the Wynnum Manly Rugby League Club. Clubs that were once bankrupt and in receivership are now vital clubs providing many services to the community. I intend to talk about these services a little bit later.

This legislation preserves the absolute essence of club membership. The essence of club membership is mutuality. It means that the profits of club membership and club trading stay within the club and do not go to third parties. The hotel industry and other corporations—who are in the industry to make a profit, and I have no objection to that whatsoever—accept the fact that clubs exist and that they are a vital part of our leisure and entertainment industry on the basis that they are not for profit and that any profits are retained internally. It has been mooted that we should establish surf-lifesaving supporters clubs. If we allow revenue sharing arrangements under such entities as TABCorp, we are creating de facto corporations for profit that put at risk the whole integrity of the rest of the hospitality sector. The Government cannot countenance that. The previous speaker, the member for Southport, generously conceded that point in his speech.

This legislation has the strong support of Clubs Queensland and the Queensland Hotels Association. The Government had to act, and act promptly, to cut out something that was happening which was totally against the spirit of the law.

Some clubs, in good faith, entered into agreements with TABCorp and other financial operators on revenue sharing bases and have incurred liabilities as a result. The Government is very sympathetic to that situation. It is very important that we preserve the financial viability of those clubs that have entered into agreements in good faith. I believe the Moreton Bay Trailer Boat Club is one club in my electorate that has found itself in this situation. I understand that amendments likely to be moved by the Honourable the Treasurer in the Committee stage will deal with that issue.

There has been an unfortunate suggestion circulating that the Beattie Government has not been sufficiently supportive of the surf-lifesaving movement in advocating this legislation. It is unfortunate that certain individuals would seek to say that because it is untrue. I find it hurtful and offensive. I am not the world's greatest swimmer. When swimming ability was handed out in my household my wife received about 99.9% of it, the kids got the rest and I got none. So if anyone would benefit—

Dr Watson: I might push you in the pool.

Mr LUCAS: If you push me in the pool I will kick sand in your face.

As someone who is not a strong swimmer, I can completely understand the great role that the surf-lifesaving movement performs in this State and in this country. It is one of those quintessentially Australian institutions. It is something that we only see in this country. It is not the idea of this legislation to in any way adversely affect the surf-lifesaving movement. If we look at what previous Labor administrations have done—indeed all administrations—to support surf-lifesaving in our State, we could not objectively say that.

In 1992 the poker machine legislation was introduced. My wife, my family and I normally spend our summer holidays on the Gold Coast. There is nothing better than having a nice steak and a beer at the Tugun Surf Life Saving Club.

Mr Gibbs: You are an outstanding specimen on the beach, I am told.

Mr LUCAS: Yes, my children and my wife are.

Poker machine revenue has enabled clubs such as the Tugun Surf Life Saving Club to provide those types of facilities to their members and the public. Poker machine legislation introduced by this Government and the former Goss Government has supported surf-lifesaving. It is very instructive to note that in this year's Budget the Beattie Government has increased funding to the surf-lifesaving movement by some \$600,000, bringing the total to some \$3.1m. In other words, we put our money where our mouth was in the Budget before this was an issue. In that way we said what we really thought about the surf-lifesaving movement.

Prior to 1992 we had the situation in which a lot of clubs in Queensland were marginal. As I said before, the Wynnum Manly Leagues Club was essentially broke. Money was going to New South Wales to pay for the New South Wales club industry. There were two things that made the Wynnum Manly Leagues Club the strong, vibrant club that it is today. One of those things was the Goss Government poker machine legislation and the other was excellent management from the board of directors and staff of the club and the commitment of the local community. It was those two things in tandem that made the Wynnum Manly Leagues Club the organisation that it is today. As the member for Mansfield lamented yesterday, perhaps had Labor got into Government earlier and been able to institute poker machine legislation, the great Valleys Rugby League Club may not have vanished from the scene.

In considering the benefits to the gaming machine sector and the hospitality industry, I want to spend some time talking about two local clubs and one local hotel. It is not all beer and skittles. Problems do arise with gambling. Fortunately, we do not seem to have seen it in Queensland to the extent that it exists in Victoria. I am not sure why that is. Perhaps we have more things to do in Queensland. Perhaps that is why Victoria has bigger football crowds than we have. We all love our football, but they have nothing else to do but go to sporting events.

Dr Watson: More sunshine.

Mr LUCAS: More sunshine, as the member quite rightly points out. The fact is that there are serious problems with gambling which have to be addressed. I welcome the Government's inquiry into this matter. The vast majority of people use clubs responsibly and the vast majority of clubs treat their patrons responsibly.

First of all, I refer to the Wynnum Manly Leagues Club, which is under the excellent stewardship of its Chairman, Arthur Lovell; Manager, Geoff Crowe; and Executive Secretary, Peter Doyle. The Wynnum Manly Leagues Club takes its responsibilities very, very seriously to the extent that it was voted by Clubs Queensland as the best community service club in Queensland for two years in a row—1997 and 1998. That is an indication of how a club such as the Wynnum Manly Leagues Club takes its responsibilities. I refer to its record in detail. Between January 1998 and January 1999, it spent \$369,931 in supporting local organisations, such as the Wynnum Seagulls Football Club and the Wynnum Rugby League Junior Football Club, which one would expect it to support and that support is well deserved, but also it supports other local organisations such as the Wynnum district primary schools, the Endeavour Foundation and the Wynnum Police Citizens Youth Club. We would be here all day if I read out the approximately 40 organisations that that club supported with that money. In terms of sponsorship, the club spent \$284,382. Obviously, a substantial part of that, some \$278,000, went to the Wynnum Seagulls Football Club—a great local club—as one would expect.

As I said, the Minister for Tourism, Sport and Racing formerly ran around the paddock for that club. It performs a great role in our community and gives many young sporting people a decent chance to enjoy their football. Not only that, the club also sponsors the Sylvan Woods Nursing Home and the Darling Point Special School, and on a number of occasions it has also put on free concerts for the elderly. The club funds a sports development program to the extent of \$39,717 and hosts schoolboys competitions. I went to the Great Britain v. Australia schoolboys Rugby League match held at Kougari Oval.

The club also supports school sports expos. It provides the use of its functions room for free, at a cost to its revenue of an additional \$47,280. The club provides the use of its grounds and facilities to a number of organisations, such as the Queensland Secondary Schools Rugby League, Queensland Softball, the Moreton Junior Cricket Club and the Point Lookout Surf Life Saving Club, to name just a few. The club gives prize donations totalling \$2,315 to local schools, Basketball Queensland and the 4KQ Children's Christmas Party. I even noticed that at one stage it provided the free use of a room for the local Liberal Party shadow Minister, which is quite appropriate. It is a non-political organisation. I could never complain about the support that I get from that club, either.

The club has a fantastic record. It is no wonder that it won the community service club prize for two years in a row. That is not to mention the sorts of things that the club provides for its patrons, such as very cheap, good quality meals.

Mr McGrady: Inexpensive meals.

Mr LUCAS: Yes, and a free courtesy bus around the area. I will table the list that details the support that that club provides to local organisations. Of course, that is not to mention the \$180,000 that the club pays into the Gaming Machine Benefits Fund.

The other organisation about which I want to speak is the Wynnum R.S.L. Services Memorial Club, which is another great local institution. It draws its great strength from the veterans and returned servicemen and women community, although it really is a community club as well, under the chairmanship of its President, Brian Turpin; its General Manager, Michael Day; and Lindsay Jemmott, the Secretary, Accounting and Finance. It supports organisations locally such as the Wynnum R.S.L. Sub Branch, the Manly Lota RSL and Legacy—great organisations that are very worthy of support. The club supports other organisations such as the Wynnum Manly Citizens Band, numerous local schools, Wynnum Netball and BABI Youth and Family Support, which supplies accommodation to homeless youth in the area. It does a fantastic job. The club also supports the Waterloo Bay Leisure Centre. The club also makes cash and kind donations of about \$60,000. Again, I table that list for the benefit of the House. Of course, that club makes a contribution to the Gaming Machine Benefits Fund of about \$150,000.

However, it is not only clubs that make this contribution; the hotel sector has a very important role to play in our community. Although it is no longer in my electorate—it was originally in the electorate of Lytton—I refer to the Colmslie Hotel and the McGuire family. In fact, the McGuire family are former employers of the member for Cleveland when he used to work at a drive-in bottle shop.

Mr Briskey: One of their star employees.

Mr LUCAS: He certainly was a star employee. He went from a star employee there to a star employee here.

Certainly, the McGuire family, as proprietors of the Colmslie and other hotels, have taken their role as community developers and sponsors very seriously. The Colmslie Benefit Trust, which has been going for many years and which was established under their support and guidance, does a fantastic job. Unfortunately, the Colmslie Hotel is no longer in my electorate; it is in the electorate of my colleague the member for Bulimba, but the McGuire family is a great family and great supporters of the community.

A Government member interjected.

Mr LUCAS: I certainly do have a talk to the McGuire brothers from time to time. They are great people: great Queenslanders and great supporters of the community.

Mr Briskey: They still support organisations in your electorate.

Mr LUCAS: They do, for example, the Moreton Bay Nursing Care Unit.

Of course, time permits me to cite only examples of the clubs and hotels because most hotels and clubs support their community actively. However, I want to refer to another hotel, and that is the Manly Hotel, which is run by the McDonald family. Unfortunately, I do not have dollar figures, but in recent times they have supported about 30 organisations, such as the Wynnum Vikings Australian Rules Club, the Point Lookout Surf Life Saving Club, the Incapacitated Servicemen and Women's Association, the Redlands Softball Association and the Wynnum Manly Netball Association, to name a few. Again, I table a list of the approximately 30 organisations that the Manly Hotel has supported. That demonstrates that that hotel takes its role in the community seriously.

This Government is taking legislative action to ensure that a system with the integrity to allow them to do that remains in place. I might add that not only does the Manly Hotel provide that support in the local community but it also employs a number of workers with disabilities under supported employment programs. It really plays a fantastic role in our local community, and I give full credit to the McDonald family for that.

In conclusion, it is very, very important that this Parliament supports the passage of this Bill. It preserves the integrity of a system that has served us well. It enables clubs and hotels, in the fashion that I have just demonstrated, to continue to support our local community. They are a vital part of the fabric of our society and we should never tolerate schemes, proposals or arrangements that can put that support at risk. That is why I would like to congratulate the Treasurer on his foresight in bringing forward this legislation. It is very, very important that we pass it today.
