



Speech by

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**MEMBER FOR MANSFIELD**

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Hansard 23 March 1999

**GAMING MACHINE AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

**Mr REEVES** (Mansfield—ALP) (3.58 p.m.): It is with a great deal of pleasure that I rise to support the Gaming Machine and Other Legislation Amendment Bill, introduced by the Treasurer. At the outset, I should declare my interests. I am presently the vice-president of the Mt Gravatt Sporting and Workers Club. I have also had many years of involvement in the club industry—from a member to a worker. I have also given many hours of my own time to voluntary work within the club industry. That is why I feel so strongly in supporting this Bill.

The club industry is all about the community. Clubs have a unique and special place within our community. The whole purpose of clubs is to provide an environment for like-minded individuals to share a common interest. Clubs are owned and managed by their members as non-profit bodies. They are recognised as an important part of the community infrastructure and their status is reflected in a range of concessions, including tax and corporations. A key element of this status is the requirement that all the profits stay within and are used for the purposes of the club.

**Mr Schwarten:** Do you ever contribute to the profits of the club?

**Mr REEVES:** Many a time.

**Ms Spence:** We had lunch there the other day.

**Mr REEVES:** We certainly did. This may mean expenditure on sporting equipment or dining and entertainment facilities, for the community as a whole to benefit from. Unlike other organisations which have a privileged position within our community, on the whole clubs have not misused this privilege. In fact, they have contributed greatly to the community they support. We can contrast this with the banking industry, which also has a privileged place in our society and which has misused this privilege often. This legislation is so important because it ensures that the privileged place held by clubs is not capitalised on by outside investors. It ensures that the profits made are put back in the local community and not directed to the wealthy racehorse owners or punters in Melbourne.

The club industry should be complimented on the services it provides not only to its members but to the community as a whole—from great facilities to donations to the more needy of our society. I am sure that all of us in this House could easily come up with a huge list of donations made and assistance given by the club industry to many community groups within their local areas. It has been able to do this because of its privileged position within our society. However, this was threatened by the entrepreneurial attitude of TABCorp and others. The Treasurer should be congratulated on introducing this Bill, which will alleviate this problem, thus ensuring that the privileged position the club industry has within our society will be maintained.

We will not have a situation in the future of a club being told by its investor, for example, TABCorp, to make certain decisions. This could have resulted in clubs no longer donating money to charity groups or to their own sporting groups in order to market gaming aspects. This is the situation that would have been created as a result of the changes to the legislation proposed by the member for Moggill. We would have had the likes of TABCorp dictating to the clubs where they should be spending their money.

The design and layout of the proposed super supporters' clubs illustrate this point. The proposed Strathpine Club included a 260-poker machine lounge with a bar and a 250-seat bistro. No other areas such as those seen at most other present clubs were proposed; for example, lounge areas

where people can be entertained and relax. And what about training rooms for a particular sport, for example, surf-lifesaving? They were interested only in designing poker machine palaces. There was no indication that other services would be offered, with the exception of the money gambling generation of the crowd and poker machines. As I said, most other clubs have areas where people can sit and relax and enjoy free entertainment and have club rooms where sporting clubs can conduct meetings and training.

Had we allowed the growth of these entrepreneurial clubs, the club industry as we know it would be a shadow of its former self. This legislation will give effect to this Government's commitment to the club industry by implementing a package of changes which will stop entrepreneurial activities being conducted to the detriment of clubs and their members.

The club industry knows that the Labor Government is committed to supporting it. Let us not forget that it was the Goss Labor Government that introduced gaming machines. This action single-handedly saved many of the clubs whose futures were threatened. We all have stories of clubs that were just about to close their doors before poker machines were introduced. Far from being supported by Government prior to 1989, the club industry had a Government aiding and abetting its competitors. It was all right for thousands upon millions of Queenslanders' dollars to go across the border to benefit the northern New South Wales community, but it was not all right for that money to be spent in Queensland clubs for the benefit of our community.

One thing is for sure: the club industry as a whole is once bitten, twice shy by the coalition Governments of the past. The same political parties that prevented the growth of the club industry for so many years are the same ones that have created the mess that this Labor Government is sorting out. I am proud to say that it is the Beattie Labor Government which is fixing up the mess of those opposite.

While we as a Government can be proud of the fact that we introduced poker machines to Queensland to stem the flow of money to south of the border—it is now going into our community—we are not so arrogant, unlike others, that we cannot recognise that the growth of the gaming industry may be creating some social problems. Rather than sweeping them under the carpet, the usual coalition way, we are facing the problems front on with the recently announced review on the effect of gaming on Queenslanders.

One should not forget the significant benefits to Queensland, both socially and economically, since the introduction of gaming machines. Some of these benefits include improved services and facilities in community clubs; the investment of over \$350m in new and refurbished clubs in the past five years; the resultant creation of many thousands of additional jobs in the building industry alone; and the employment generation in the clubs themselves. Over 22,000 people are employed on a full-time or part-time basis in the industry.

We have seen the establishment of the Casino Community Benefit Fund, which received over \$4.7m; the Gaming Machine Community Benefit Fund, \$17.3m; the Sport and Recreation Benefit Fund, \$43.7m; and the Charities and Rehabilitation Benefit Fund, \$26.4 million. We see better funded Government services because of the extra revenue generated for the State Government.

Let us not forget about the enjoyment and social interaction that many Queenslanders have gained from going to their local club or hotel, rather than having to go once a year for a trip to the Tweed River. I clearly remember the club and hotel industry prior to the introduction of the poker machines to Queensland, and one could not say that the demographics, especially the sex, of those who go to the clubs and local hotels have not changed dramatically. In the past, women rightfully viewed clubs and hotels as male bastions. Now women, particularly older women, feel very safe going to their local hotel or club to socialise with friends and maybe even have a go on the pokies.

**Mr Lucas:** The Wynnum Leagues Club pays for a courtesy bus, I might add.

**Mr REEVES:** A very good club. No doubt many of us in this House have been bombarded by information and some mistruths by Surf Life Saving Queensland. I am extremely disappointed with its attitude on the matter of entrepreneurial clubs. I have met with the organisation and have made it extremely clear that I would be willing to assist it if it wanted to set up a club in my area. However, I added that I was totally against the entrepreneurial aspects of the club. I am about people within our community spending money which gets put back into our local community.

While Surf Life Saving Queensland purports that it speaks for the whole surf-lifesaving movement, those I have spoken to within surf-lifesaving are not 100% behind the proposal it put forward. In fact, many have been quite outspoken against the proposal. My disappointment was that, instead of listening to these views, it decided to attack these clubs. I notice that the member for Mooloolah is not presently in the Chamber. Surf Life Saving Queensland did not refer to the support of the Mooloolaba Surf Life Saving Club for this Bill. That club has 20,000 members on the Sunshine Coast. I believe it is a role model that most surf-lifesaving clubs could follow. That club contributes

greatly not only to surf-lifesaving as a whole within Mooloolaba but also to the general Sunshine Coast community.

I am sure that the member for Toowoomba South will back me up on that, because I remember being involved in phantom race calls in clubs prior to being elected to this place. I met Mr Horan at the Mooloolaba Surf Life Saving Club.

**Mr Lucas:** Was he a phantom deputy leader there?

**Mr REEVES:** He probably was. I am sure he learnt first-hand of its involvement within the local community. It was disappointing to me that at my meeting on this proposed legislation with Surf Life Saving Queensland it attacked the motive and the performance of the Mooloolaba Surf Life Saving Club. One looks at it as an example of using its best resources—location and views—to the best advantage of both the club itself and the community as a whole. I know of many other surf clubs that have taken this example and are putting it into practice. I only wish Surf Life Saving Queensland would put its mind to this project, rather than look at a short-term gain for itself without reviewing the long-term pain for the club industry as a whole if this proposal of setting up super clubs with TABCorp were accepted.

The achievements at the Mooloolaba Surf Life Saving Club, under the guidance of its president, Doug Jewry, and the managers, Reg and Ros Cannon, are a credit to them. I take great support from the fact that they are asserting that this legislation is essential for the future of the club industry. This new legislation, they say, will ensure that profits generated by poker machines within our sporting clubs will, in fact, be retained by the clubs and the community. They believe that the good name of surf-lifesaving is being put on the line to establish these super clubs and, at the same time, put at risk the viability of the present supporters clubs within the individual surf clubs up and down the Queensland coast.

As I said earlier in my speech, I take great pride in my involvement in the club industry over a number of years. However, in common with many other Queenslanders who have been involved in the sports and club industry, I remember only too well the problems those opposite caused. And more importantly, they did not prevent the demise of many of our great sporting clubs. Those who listened to or read my first speech would know of my involvement with Brothers Rugby League Club. This year, for the first time since 1920, Past Brothers Rugby League Football Club Brisbane is actually that: past. It does not have a side in either the Brisbane or State League competition. The simple fact is that the corruption of the Bjelke-Petersen Government ensured that pokies did not come to Queensland, and that meant that their great financial support, which would have been the saviour of a club that is an institution in Queensland, was not forthcoming. Unfortunately, the election of the Goss Labor Government was too late to save the club from losing its home base at Corbett Park, the Grange—a loss from which it has never recovered.

So let me assure those opposite that I will never let people forget that it was the coalition parties which were responsible for the downfall of Brothers and some other great sporting clubs. Do they remember Valleys? This is why I feel so strongly about this piece of legislation. The club industry is vital to the whole social fabric of Queensland. It is important that we do everything to maintain and strengthen that fabric. Unlike those opposite, I am representing a party that has the runs on the board in its support of the club industry. Those opposite will go down in Queensland's history as the club wreckers, and we, the Labor Government, will go down as the club builders.

I wish to congratulate the Treasurer and the Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer, the member for Cleveland, on the great work they have done on this legislation, and I look forward to working with them in improving the club industry and keeping it as a vital component in the fabric of our Queensland society and local communities. I congratulate all those within the club and hotel industries on their support of this Bill. I will proudly represent the Minister for Tourism, Sport and Racing at the Clubs Queensland annual dinner in a few weeks' time. I will be proud of the legislation that we are passing here today, because its benefit to the whole club industry will be seen for years to come. I support the Bill.

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