



Speech by

**Hon. D. HAMILL**

**MEMBER FOR IPSWICH**

---

Hansard 12 April 2000

### **MINISTERIAL STATEMENT**

#### **Gaming**

**Hon. D. J. HAMILL** (Ipswich—ALP) (Treasurer) (9.48 a.m.), by leave: I have the pleasure to announce the Beattie Government's policy direction for gambling in Queensland. These reforms are the result of extensive community consultation which surrounded the review of gaming that I commissioned last year and the Government's green paper on gaming in Queensland. The Government undertook the review in response to the enormous community concern over the growth of gaming and its impact on the members of our community. The product of this 12-month review process puts Queensland at the forefront of the reform of gambling laws in Australia and puts in place the toughest gaming regime in the country. The Government's reforms will not just get tough on gaming; they will comprehensively address the impact of gambling in general. It is about striking a balance between those who can enjoy gambling and an industry that provides jobs and for those who cannot control their gambling and the families and communities who suffer as a result. That balance will be achieved through an investment in protection, prevention and rehabilitation via the Government's responsible gambling strategy.

The Government's policy is a comprehensive statement and I will outline some of the key outcomes for the benefit of members. After unprecedented consultation with individuals, community and industry groups around the State, the Government has agreed to cap machine limits at 280 for clubs and 40 for hotels from 1 January 2001. That is a significant reduction in machine numbers from the limits proposed by the coalition's white paper, which would have allowed clubs to go to 300 machines and hotels to go to 45 machines by July next year.

The prospect for growth has been slashed by more than 16,000 machines and that is good for Queensland communities. These measures will prevent "convenience gaming" venues at shopping centres or restaurants.

The public will now be consulted on all applications for new gaming venues and significant increases in machine numbers at existing sites. If existing clubs want to increase machine numbers by 20 or more the public must be consulted. If a hotel wishes to increase its machines by 10 or more the public must be consulted. A club or hotel granted extra machines now has six months to install the machines or lose the right to those machines. Operators will not be able to hoard machine approvals. If a new licence is granted, regulations will require machines to be installed within 12 months or that approval will lapse. Furthermore, venues will be permitted only one application to increase machines in a single year.

There has been media speculation and concern expressed to me by members about large interstate clubs looking to take over Queensland clubs. Let me assure the community that interstate clubs will be subjected to Queensland's new machine limits. Any gaming machines operated interstate by a club will be taken into account in determining the number of machines that they could operate in Queensland. In effect, if an interstate club already has 280 machines it will not be able to acquire a Queensland club. The limit will also protect small community clubs from being gobbled up by the big Queensland clubs.

This is a comprehensive reform package that tightens regulations but also targets the regrettable issue of problem gambling. The Government has developed a responsible gambling strategy that has at its core the goal of restoring balance through protection, prevention and rehabilitation.

The Productivity Commission report on Australian gambling industries has shown that 77% of problem gamblers make extensive use of gaming machines fitted with note acceptors. These machines take bank notes of any denomination and permit long periods of uninterrupted gaming activity. Note acceptors on gaming machines in all venues, including casinos, will be limited to receiving \$5, \$10 and \$20 notes. Acceptance of higher value notes will be prohibited. We will also prohibit credit betting on gaming machines, whether through existing or future technologies.

The new responsible gambling strategy will also provide an industry code of practice, education campaigns, support services to people with a gambling problem and an advertising code of practice. A new responsible gambling fund will be established to coordinate research into the social and economic costs of gambling, and direct increased funding to address problem gambling.

Through the development of a policy direction for gaming in this State and a new responsible gambling strategy, the Beattie Labor Government has again shown itself as a reforming Government that has listened to the people of Queensland and implemented changes that will restore the balance between the costs and benefits of gambling in this State.

---