



Speech by

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GAMBLING LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Mr WILSON (Ferny Grove—ALP) (4.32 p.m.): It is my great pleasure to stand and support the Gambling Legislation Amendment Bill 2000. Following the review of gaming in Queensland report to the Treasurer in December 1999 and the Green Paper in December 2000, the release of the policy direction for gambling in Queensland heralded a broad range of responsible gambling initiatives for the State with the aim of achieving a greater balance and better coordination of gambling services.

The initiatives under the new direction include, firstly, gaming machine limits of 280 for clubs immediately and 40 for hotels by 1 January 2001; secondly, limits on note acceptors, with their being able to accept only up to \$20 notes within 12 months; thirdly, expanded powers for the Queensland Gaming Commission in relation to approving applications for new gaming machine site licences and increased machine numbers at existing sites, involving increased consultation with the community and local authorities; fourthly, the dedication of funds to support strategic research programs and responsible gambling initiatives; fifthly, expanding and extending support services, especially counselling, to those individuals experiencing gambling-related hardships; and, finally, reviewing and amending the previous funding system to achieve optimum community benefit from gambling-derived funds.

It is very clear from looking at this legislation, and at the reports upon which it is based, that we as a Government are putting a very heavy emphasis and focus upon the issue of community development. Really, in many ways a community development outlook is embodied in the provisions of these amendments, especially as they relate to gaming machines. In my view, that is entirely consistent with the way in which we should be working in the local community.

In the electorate of Ferny Grove there are a number of developments taking place that involve opportunities to develop the local community in a way that is quite supportive of community organisations, families and young people. This community development outlook can be seen in the way we should be approaching any new major shopping centre development, such as the Great Western Supercentre that is being built on the corner of Settlement Road and Samford Road. Equally, the approach to community policing around the major shopping centre at Brookside is another example of where we are trying to create a community development outlook in coming to grips with local issues and concerns.

Some of the businesses of the shopping strips in the area are getting together and developing a business community around their shopping strips because they wish to build up the support for those shopping areas in the local community. The way in which we treat public spaces, especially for young people, must be from the viewpoint of developing the friendliness and the supportive environment of the local community for young people.

In another area, the development of multipurpose sporting venues is best approached from a community development angle whereby we are trying to coordinate and integrate various sporting clubs at single venues to maximise the outcome for a broad range of sports, especially junior sports. The list could go on. The way in which clubs are approached in the local community is clearly from a community development outlook. The way in which community organisations are supported, for example, through the Gaming Machine Community Benefit Fund also shows that we as a Government are very anxious

to do whatever we can to support the development of local community initiatives. So when one comes to the gaming machine area, it is very important to see consistency with this preoccupation with community development.

One area I wish to address particularly connected with the gaming machine issue is community impact statements. It is very clear that over the last several years there has been a growing anxiety and concern within the community about the overall impact of gambling generally, and gaming machines in particular, on communities, families and especially working people and socially disadvantaged areas. This Government, through its review and now this amending legislation, is fully taking on board that community concern.

Certainly I have clearly seen in my local area that concern. When a recent application was notified for the grant of a licence for 35 gaming machines additional to the area, except for one instance the community response was overwhelmingly against any increase in gaming machines at any new site in my local area. Those concerns and views have been passed on to the appropriate authorities to take into account when considering that particular application.

I come to the community impact statements. The extensive consultation associated with the review of gaming in Queensland and the Green Paper on gaming in Queensland very clearly indicated community concern with the continuing growth of gaming. The growth of gaming machines was identified as the area of greatest concern. The Government has decided that the Gaming Commission should be provided with more information on the impact of decisions on new gaming machine licences and significant increases in the number of machines at existing premises. A regulation has been drafted specifying "significant" to be an increase of 20 or more machines at a club or 10 or more machines at a hotel. Queensland is at the forefront of ensuring consideration of the community impact likely to be associated with gaming machines. Accordingly, the commission's decisions will be better informed by the use of community impact statements, which are expected to be developed by qualified experts in the field.

To this end the Bill allows the commission to seek public comment and requires the preparation of a community impact statement when there is an application for a new gaming machine licence and where there is an application for a significant increase in the number of machines. The legislation also requires a community impact statement to be prepared for any increase in machine numbers where there is cause for concern.

It is anticipated that the information to be addressed in the community impact statements will include, firstly, venue information, including proximity of the proposed development to community areas such as churches, schools, shopping centres and other public areas; proximity to areas such as Centrelink, St Vincent de Paul and other treatment or activity centres will be considered; and proximity to areas frequented by minors, such as amusement arcades and cinemas.

Secondly, characteristics of the local community will be assessed, including age distribution, economy, tourism patronage and areas of social disadvantage. Thirdly, it will include predicted social impacts of the proposed development, including anticipated patron numbers, disadvantage factors such as levels of unemployment in the area, welfare dependency and so on, and the attitude of local residents to the proposed gaming venue.

The Government is well advanced in developing the requirements for community impact statements in consultation with the community, broadly advertising in the print media and on the Internet for public comment on a draft model. The Clubs Queensland and the Queensland Hotels Association submissions on the draft community impact statement were broadly supportive of improved community consultation. The Government believes that clubs and hotels that hope to benefit from machine gaming decisions would be expected by the general community to contribute to a comprehensive impact assessment process. In this regard, the initiative of the community impact statement is a key component of our policy direction for gambling in Queensland and strives in effect to balance the social and economic benefits and costs of gambling in Queensland communities.

This legislation deserves the support of this House. For all of the reasons put forward by the Treasurer and the other speakers in support of the Bill, I also endorse the legislation and commend it to the House.
