



Speech by

Hon. K. LINGARD

MEMBER FOR BEAUDESERT

Hansard 13 September 2001

GAMING MACHINE AMENDMENT REGULATION (No. 1) 2001
Disallowance of Statutory Instrument

Hon. K. R. LINGARD (Beaudesert—NPA) (12.04 p.m.): I have pleasure in seconding the Leader of the Opposition's motion. There is no doubt that when one talks to Public Works officers and listens to their briefings, one of their biggest projects is the \$280 million for the redevelopment of Lang Park. There is no doubt that this was always to be considered a government project. There was never any doubt that the government intended to pay for this particular project. But after former Minister Gibbs made his announcements about Lang Park, and the Premier made a commitment that no taxpayers' money would be spent on Lang Park, the government had to get itself out of that particular situation. The government believed at that time that corporate bodies would help with the funding of the Lang Park redevelopment. But that ended up being an absolute farce, because the corporate bodies were not forthcoming. So the government had to work out how it was going to complete its commitment to redevelop Lang Park.

Members on this side of the House have never been concerned about Lang Park. Some of us have had ideas about other stadiums. But certainly, some of us agreed with the redevelopment of Lang Park. And certainly, we have never disagreed with \$280 million being spent on that project. But we have certainly disagreed with the government's strategy of trying to indicate that this is not taxpayers' money. This was always going to be taxpayers' money. And however the government raises the money, it is taxpayers' money. As I said, when one receives a briefing from Public Works Department officers, they indicate that this is one of their biggest projects. So, unable to raise the money, they had to work out how they were going to get it. And, quite obviously, this levy was set up.

The opposition opposes clause 11 of this bill in particular on the basis that it is discriminatory to hotels. Why was it developed in this way? One of the biggest things about this particular levy is that it has not hurt many individuals or corporate bodies. So when the government worked out how it was going to raise this money, obviously if it set out to levy the clubs that would have been unpopular. Only a very small number of individuals and corporate bodies are affected by this tax. However, hotels are taxed much higher than clubs, at a flat rate equivalent to the highest tax bracket for the clubs. Despite this, and since the pub tax was introduced for hotels with a monthly taxable win of \$260,000 or more, they will be taxed the equivalent of 40 per cent more than a club with an equivalent revenue stream. If the Beattie government must tax this sector to fund its white elephant on Hale Street, this tax must apply to clubs as well as hotels.

The opposition's position is to oppose the bill on the grounds that the hotel tax is iniquitous and discriminatory. The introduction of this tax is contrary to ALP election promises of no new taxes. Additionally, the establishment of a Major Facilities Fund, financed by a major facilities levy, does not provide any guarantee that there will be statewide benefit for the development of major public sporting facilities or major cultural facilities or infrastructure of a statewide nature. To date, Lang Park has been identified as a beneficiary. Perhaps the Gallery of Modern Art may be the next major cultural facility to benefit from the fund. But there is no publicly assessable criteria or transparency in the decision making, just a reliance on the government calling it a 'capital city facility' of statewide significance.

Another concern is the government's lack of accountability. The Public Works Committee has continually refused to look at the Lang Park project. Therefore, a body that was set up as per the

Fitzgerald inquiry recommendations to look at projects of the government has not looked at Lang Park and continually refuses to do so. Obviously, any criticism by me has been referred to the Members' Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges Committee in an attempt to keep me quiet. So we find the Public Works Committee with a \$280 million project. A committee set up as per the recommendations of the Fitzgerald inquiry to look at these projects still refuses to look at the Lang Park project.

So if the Public Works Committee is not going to do it, who else can do it? Why not the Public Accounts Committee? I spoke to Public Works officers the other day, and I think that this project was their second-largest project—there was one for \$370 million. So their second-largest project has not been looked at by the Public Works Committee. Similarly, the Public Accounts Committee has not looked at it. And the government continues to refuse to bring in Auditors-General who are performance based. As I have said many times, it is ridiculous to think that if the government is going to control the Public Works Committee and make sure that it does not look at the Lang Park project, and if it controls the Public Accounts Committee and says that it is not going to look at it, then surely it should have an Auditor-General who looks at the project and makes it performance based. But all we have at present is an Auditor-General who looks at the government's accounts and says, 'Yes, invoices and statements match up with payments.'

Therefore, the Auditor-General does not report back to the parliament and says, 'I don't believe this particular department under this particular minister is spending money correctly.' Not only that, the Auditor-General should also be able to say, 'I believe money should be able to be spent in this particular area, and it is not being spent in that particular area.' So we have nothing based on performance. That has been mentioned many, many times.

So we see the government undertake a project such as Lang Park with, quite obviously, the Public Works Department putting a massive amount of money into the planning of it. They accept that. When we look at the details, we can see that they know that they are spending a lot of money on the Lang Park project. We all know that Main Roads is spending a massive amount of money on infrastructure around Lang Park. We all know that Queensland Rail is spending a massive amount of money at Milton. As far as the government is concerned, that money is not taxpayers' money. To the government, it is not putting any taxpayers' money into the Lang Park development. Of course it is! The Department of State Development and the Department of Natural Resources are spending money on resumptions or acquisitions of land around Lang Park. Quite obviously, the government is hiding the whole expenditure by continuing to refer to the Premier's ridiculous statement that there will be no taxpayers' money spent on Lang Park. The government is simply trying to vindicate a statement that was made by the Premier.
