



Speech by

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MEMBER FOR GLASS HOUSE

Hansard 4 June 2003

GAMING MACHINE AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Ms MALE (Glass House—ALP) (9.42 p.m.): I rise in the support of the Gaming Machine and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. It is sensible and balanced legislation written after months of thorough consultation with key stakeholders. The bill recognises the rights of gaming machine licensees to carry out their business but also, through a system of tight regulation, ensures that the gaming machine industry is operated in an open and accountable manner.

Just like other members, I have lots of hotels and clubs in my electorate that return a lot to the community. Clubs such as the Maleny, Beerwah and Landsborough hotels certainly support the community by providing jobs and a safe place for entertainment. Of course, as in other electorates, they sponsor many of the different fundraising events in my electorate, and we all thank them for that.

Some may feel that the industry is overregulated but, when confronted with the social ills generated by people who are addicted to gambling, the state needs to keep a tight rein over this industry. The state government has opened a new support service which works with people in my electorate who are addicted to gambling and also with their families, because it is often families who bear the brunt of this addiction. There are a multitude of options open for those who wish to gamble on any given day, and the government has a moral and social obligation to ensure that the machines do not proliferate in any one community. It is also incumbent on us to ensure that help is there for those who spiral into the cycle of addiction and debt and seemingly cannot help themselves.

That is why it is particularly pleasing to see that the Queensland Gaming Commission will continue its public benefit test when considering fresh applications and continue to reject applications where the commission considers the density of machines in one area to be too high for the social situation of the area. I would also urge the commission to keep a close watch on the number of licences in the Caboolture area in line with this public benefit test. Caboolture is going ahead in leaps and bounds but, like many fast-growing areas, it is struggling with its own socioeconomic problems. As we know, high growth does not equate to high income and many of Caboolture's families cannot afford to lose income through rash gambling choices.

The provisions in the bill which limit how many authorities and, hence, machines can be sold at one time and where are very sensible. These provisions, plus limiting the sale to once a year, preclude any manipulation of the industry through futures type trading. The process of public tender also limits the monopolisation of the industry and backroom deals.

The Treasurer, through this bill, has also kept the door open for further reform of the industry by enshrining a two-year review period and this, too, is a sensible measure which allows the government to keep a close eye on the operation of the industry. As the Treasurer said, Queensland has shown the rest of the states how to provide practical and responsible regulation of gambling. This legislation strengthens that claim. I commend the bill to the House.