



Speech by

Pat Purcell

MEMBER FOR BULIMBA

Hansard Tuesday, 31 August 2004

GAMBLING LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Mr PURCELL (Bulimba—ALP) (3.30 p.m.): Thank you, Mr Speaker, for allowing me to speak on the Gambling Legislation Amendment Bill 2004. Gaming acts have been in place in this state for many, many years. It is a very important aspect of government that needs to have very clear and secure laws. This legislation will make a number of significant but relatively minor amendments to achieve greater consistency in the administration of all gaming acts. It will also clarify and strengthen a number of existing provisions. One hears the words 'technical changes' and think they are unimportant. That is wrong. They are necessary and they are important. With any system that is up and running, wrinkles appear along the way. Sometimes they are good wrinkles—unexpected but welcome—and sometimes they are bad wrinkles, with people taking advantage and abusing the laws.

This legislation is necessary. These changes are necessary and they are important. The amendments will strengthen the power of the regulator to deal with issues of private sector involvement in clubs. I think that is something that a lot of us had concerns about years ago, but a lot of the things that have happened in that regard recently have been positive and we need to take that into account.

Next there are amendments to provide for a consistent model across five gaming acts for the exclusion of problem gamblers from gaming venues. We have heard people talk at length about problem gamblers. People will do with their money what they will. When I was about 14 I saw a bloke burn £400 on the floor because, as far as he was concerned, it was his money and nobody else was going to get it. Because of problems he had with a marriage, he burnt it. He got rid of it. He could have gambled it at a racetrack or whatever, but he got rid of it. If people want to get rid of money, they are going to get rid of it.

Amendments to the Casino Control Act 1982 provide for situations where an overpayment to patrons is made at a casino. That really speaks for itself. I think people make mistakes from time to time and that needs to be sorted. Amendments to the Charitable and Non-Profit Gaming Act 1999 prohibit minors collecting prizes that contain liquor or another gaming product. I think that is self-explanatory. We do not want to encourage people to break the law, and that is what that does. This will sort that out. There are amendments to clarify that criminal history checks, including fingerprint checks, are required for candidates for appointment as commissioners to the Queensland Gaming Commission. We want on that commission people who are above reproach and whom we can trust implicitly—people who will not be able to be coerced by anybody within the industry. As we know, when there is money involved—and sometimes large amounts of money—people can be put under a lot of pressure.

There are amendments to strengthen the internal control systems required for gambling providers across all gaming acts, especially the lottery licensee, following the investigation of the Instant Scratch-It system validation matter. We need to make sure that checks and balances are there to ensure that we do not make mistakes and that we do not pay out more than we take in, I suppose, although we would all like to get a bit of that from time to time.

There are amendments to provide a consistent process for show cause action to cancel or suspend a licence. I think they are commonsense provisions. There are amendments to provide for consistency with respect to confidentiality and secrecy provisions. The Golden Casket Lottery Corporation Ltd will be able to

offer online Internet registration to players of Lotto products. This is happening with the written agreement of the casket agents association. I and other members have lobbied the Treasurer in regard to this. I think it is good that there will be a written agreement in regard to it. It will affect a lot of people, but I think it is progress and we need to be able to take care of that and make provision for it.

Various amendments to the Wagering Act 1998 address matters arising out of the enactment of the Racing Act 2002 which came into force on 1 December 2003. If members think they are unimportant, then they were not listening. We need to look after the welfare of patrons who access gambling in our state. We also need to look after our gambling institutions. These changes will do both. These changes are fair. These changes are necessary. I commend the bill to the House.