



Speech by

John-Paul Langbroek

MEMBER FOR SURFERS PARADISE

Hansard Tuesday, 8 March 2005

MAJOR SPORTS FACILITIES AMENDMENT BILL

Mr LANGBROEK (Surfers Paradise—Lib) (3.58 pm): I rise to support the Major Sports Facilities Amendment Bill. This bill is crucial as we approach another football season and our major sporting grounds will play host to tens of thousands of fans. This bill increases the penalties for those who are thinking of having fun, as it is put in the bill, and ruining the spectacle for thousands of fans.

I was disturbed to read the other day that Peter Hoare, Australia's serial pest, was releasing a DVD of his antics over the last decade, all of which have been absolutely disgraceful. This is the man who gatecrashed the funeral of INXS lead singer Michael Hutchence, as well as the 1997 Melbourne Cup and the Iran-Australia soccer qualifier in 1997. One of his other notable invasions was when he assisted the release of refugees from the Woomera Detention Centre. His antisocial behaviour has become almost folklore. However, I am pleased to see this is being treated seriously now here in Queensland.

Formerly, as has already been stated, the fine for invading a pitch was \$1500 and a night in the lock-up. It was rare, though, that these maximum penalties were handed down. Despite a history of being a pest and a nuisance, Hoare was fined only \$300 for running on to the marathon track at the Sydney Olympics with a didgeridoo. As we saw last year and as others have mentioned, similar antics cost a runner the gold medal in Athens.

With the increase of the fine to \$3,000, or \$6,000 if a player is interfered with, hopefully this will serve as a deterrent to those looking to disobey the law just to have their little bit of fame. Even more significant is the threat that a pitch invasion poses in this modern era of sport. First, the people on the sporting field are now professional sportsmen. It is not like the old days when the kids would head down to the fence 15 minutes before the end of a game at Bottomley Park to get the front position to souvenir a corner post. Today sport is the livelihood of many players and an injury caused by a spectator interfering with them in the course of the game could open up a Pandora's box of litigation. While such action may not end up at the feet of the state because stadiums are under a public authority, such actions could certainly hurt the sport and the willingness of sportsmen and sportswomen to play in Queensland. Secondly, with the heightened fears of terrorism and the amount of exposure and sheer numbers of people at sporting events, a pitch invader now raises concerns that go over and above what was usually expected or thought of. While a streaker used to be a bit of fun in a dull match between Zimbabwe and New Zealand, the immediate thought that pops into the mind now is whether that streaker could be out there for a more sinister reason.

We also have to realise that sport is worth a lot of money now. Particularly with the money that can be wagered on sport, a streaker or organised group of streakers could easily affect the result of a game at a crucial stage. In the preliminary final in the AFL in 2004 we saw a bunch of supporters interrupt the momentum of St Kilda, which looked to have Port Adelaide on the ropes. I would hate to think that such organised activity could interfere with the fairness of a sport.

All of this congratulates the government on the new increases to the maximum fines against streakers. However, I would also encourage the authority to exercise the maximum penalty where possible and make it be seen that it is doing so. This may prevent further behaviour of this nature. With those comments, I commend the bill to the House.