



Speech by

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GAMBLING LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Mr LANGBROEK (Surfers Paradise—Lib) (3.29 pm): I am most pleased to rise in this House today to speak to the Gambling Legislation Amendment Bill. In doing so, I would like to express the Liberal Party's support for this bill and the intentions that it seeks to satisfy.

In August last year when speaking on this same topic I quoted a very relevant statistic, and I would like to begin my contribution by restating that fact as a way of drawing to the attention of other members of the House the importance of certain aims of this bill. The fact is that 2.1 per cent of the population are what is characterised as problem gamblers, and it is that 2.1 per cent that make up 33 per cent of the gambling industry's market. This group of people are losing large slabs of their income—on average \$12,000 a year—in gambling pursuits. I mention this in order to highlight the contribution I wish to make to this debate here today. The bill clarifies the reporting requirements regarding the exclusions regime. This is a very important regime. As I have said many times, this is a way for problem gamblers to help themselves. Self-exclusion, in particular, is a very effective way of changing the mind of the problem gambler and gearing them into not relying on gambling rather than simply barring someone against their will with little positive progress being made by the gambler themselves towards fixing their own problem.

This bill clears up the obligations that gambling service providers have and ensures that the exclusion program works at the coalface where these problems show themselves. I commend the government on making these exclusion procedures easier to maintain. The easier they are to maintain, the greater likelihood they will have of being maintained and the more effectively they will work. In this House we often have the opportunity to make policy that will benefit the people of Queensland in a way that might not make it to the front page, yet so often it is those big political point-scoring moves that we all seek. This move makes a difference to the proportion of the population that have had, or are in severe threat of having, their lives brought down by the evils of gambling.

I commend all members of this House for taking the time to consider this very important move. With these mechanisms in place, though, I would like to mention in this House as perhaps a way of instigating discussion with the relevant ministry and stakeholders the possibility of striking a more stable balance between the number of poker machines that are sustainable from a social perspective and the reliance of clubs, and indeed the government, on revenue from these machines. I am worried that it is very easy to be content with the revenue that comes from poker machines and to keep granting licences because pubs and clubs realise that their bottom line is helped by the one-armed bandit, but as one increases the number of poker machines in this state one provides more troops to the other side in the war on gambling addiction. More machines mean that more work and innovation are needed to combat the effects of gambling addiction. There comes a point, though, when we cannot do any more in the way of help, and gambling becomes an undue burden on society that we cannot control. We need to find a position where we can have a sustainable balance between revenue and good social practice.

The member for Lockyer, who is currently at a ministerial briefing, has asked me to mention that he has had some concerns expressed to him by some of the smaller clubs in his electorate that the implementation of some of the new regulations may affect smaller clubs such as a small bowls club at Gatton due to the impositions of insisting on computer registration instead of a handwritten register. Hopefully the minister can give us an explanation on that. With those few comments, I commend the bill to the House.