



Speech by

**Shane Knuth**

**MEMBER FOR CHARTERS TOWERS**

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## **GAMBLING LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

**Mr KNUTH** (Charters Towers—NPA) (12.35 pm): I rise to speak to the Gambling Legislation Amendment Bill 2007. We will be supporting the bill as we agree that more needs to be done to limit and discourage minors' involvement in gambling and strengthen the faith the Queensland community can have in the integrity of the gambling industry. However, much more needs to be done. Queenslanders are constantly bombarded with the supposed attractiveness of gambling. Online pop-ups, scratch-its, lotto, the TAB and poker machines all promise the quick gratification of the so-called easy win. Gambling has become an obsession for a society preoccupied with the appeal of winning money. You cannot walk into a pub for lunch anymore without being exposed to the clicking of coins in a poker machine. You cannot search on the internet without pop-ups encouraging you to join some online gambling service. You cannot watch TV without ads about massive jackpots. This is what our children are submitted to daily.

Youth participation in gambling is at an all-time high. It has become too easy for young people to be involved in gambling activities. Any moves to decrease this participation will only be of benefit in the long term in respect of their avoiding problem gambling status. I applaud the actions of many hoteliers who have either refused to install poker machines or have removed them from their establishment to ensure a gambling-free environment is available for patrons and their family. As an example, Roger Okalyi, a Scarborough publican, hit the headlines when it was reported that he turned off all his poker machines because he was sick of watching people lose money. Late last year he sold all the pub's 40 gaming machines. Mr Okalyi noticed kids and pensioners alike regularly losing money. Despite the scepticism of others in the industry, he followed his heart and conscience and sold the machines.

More recently the South Sydney Leagues Club, at the urging of celebrity owners Russell Crowe and Peter Holmes a Court, voted to scrap its poker machines. On 20 August 2007 the *Townsville Bulletin* reported the \$193,000 daily gambling habit of residents of Townsville and Thuringowa, pumping \$40.5 million into the cities' 1,609 machines in the first seven months of last year. This is an unbelievable figure. The bulletin's editorial on the day slammed the scourge of gambling in our society. The editorial claims the story of addicts and their families should be used more widely by the government when charting the course of legislation.

We could take a page out of Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen's book when he outlawed poker machines in Queensland. Sir Joh foresaw the devastation that poker machines would cause the average family and had the intestinal—

**Government members** interjected.

**Mr KNUTH:** I will repeat that. They might have missed it. Sir Joh foresaw the devastation that poker machines would cause the average family and had the intestinal fortitude to keep Queensland pokie free. On 3 January this year Dr Brendan Nelson is quoted as saying—

... we have reached the point where enough is enough. For too much of the money that's going through those poker machines is coming out of the pockets of hard working battlers and often pensioners and the people in Australia who can actually least afford to lose that money.

If publicans and football club owners can rise to the occasion and see beyond the grab for easy money to be made out of poker machines equally so should all governments of this country. I wanted to bring that to the attention of this House.