



Speech by

Jarrod Bleijie

MEMBER FOR KAWANA

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GAMBLING AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Mr BLEIJIE (Kawana—LNP) (4.25 pm): I rise to speak in general support of the Gambling and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2009, which is before the House this afternoon. I start by thanking the shadow minister for his worthwhile and positive contribution to the debate. This bill will bring about reform to the regulation of gambling throughout Queensland. Amendments to the Liquor Act, the Racing Act and the Residential Services (Accreditation) Act seek to improve the regulation of such industries. The bill will amend several pieces of legislation including the Liquor Act 1992, the Racing Act 2002, the Interactive Gambling (Player Protection) Act 1998, the Keno Act 1996—and the list goes on.

In the second reading speech the minister boasted that the Queensland government continually aims to improve on the delivery of government services and reduce red tape and that this government seeks to reduce the regulatory burden. The Chamber of Commerce and Industry Queensland recently released a report in July this year entitled *Blueprint for fighting Queensland's over-regulation*. In that report, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry stated that the difficulty with red tape is that each individual regulation can normally be justified by government as being in the public interest. However, when we sum up all these individual regulations, together it creates a staggering regime that essentially blunts business from growing and employing. Inappropriate and inefficient regulation acts as a constraint on business growth, productivity and investment and reduces Queensland's competitiveness, both nationally and internationally. The report revealed that Queensland has over 70,000 pages of regulation and statutory laws.

Mr Ryan interjected.

Mr BLEIJIE: For the benefit of the member for Morayfield—because I hear the interjections—I agree that this piece of legislation may reduce the regulatory burden and is intended to move towards protecting the community. The difficulty I have is the government's implementation of it. The amendments to the gaming legislation will seek to minimise the potential harm from gambling in the community, ensure the integrity of gaming, and increase administrative efficiency and consistency. The amendments to the Liquor Act 1992 seek to increase administrative efficiency and flexibility, minimise the potential harm from liquor in the community, reduce the regulatory burden on industry, and ensure consistency and clarity to the provisions of the Liquor Act.

I strongly support the state-wide cap on gaming machines in clubs of 24,705. Currently there is no state-wide cap but, rather, a cap of 280 machines per site. The state-wide capping of gaming machines will ensure tighter regulatory monitoring of the distribution of gaming machines, which is a step towards minimising the harm that these machines have on users and the members of our society. We must create a balance within the community and industry to reduce the impact that gambling has on our community. We must encourage education on the impact that gambling has on the community, not just individual gamblers.

I commend the minister for creating an offence for the gambling operators who distribute, or cause a person to distribute, advertising and/or promotional material to the known excluded person—excluded either by the venue for problem gambling or subject to self-exclusion—where previously the advertising to such known excluded persons would have resulted in a mere slap on the wrist. There must be zero

tolerance of those venues that are lax in their promotion of responsible gambling and that do not fully appreciate the impact that gambling has on the individual gambler and the society and community.

I strongly support the move to create an offence for minors who gamble and the amendments to bring consistency to those inconsistent penalties with respect to the offences related to minors who gamble. I support the proposed mandatory responsible service of gambling training to all staff whose positions relate to the conduct of gambling in hotels and clubs. Once again, there must be a zero tolerance towards hotels and clubs that demonstrate an unwillingness to commit to the responsible service of gambling.

The club industry employs just over 27,000 in Queensland. It has been found that on average each club is able to provide some \$711,000 annually to their local communities in economic benefits. However, the amount of revenue that is raised as a result of gambling taxes is not proportionate to the amount that should be invested in educating and protecting the community against the dangers of excessive regular usage.

Too often we hear of cases of individual gamblers whose family and living circumstances are affected by their own excessive regular gambling. We need to educate and fight to protect our community against this harm. In closing, the issue that I see as a balancing act that we as a parliament, we as a community and we as a society must play is to try on the one hand to limit gaming machine operations throughout Queensland to have a beneficial impact on society but also realise that our local surf clubs, RSLs and so forth use this as major fundraising for the community. So in any legislation now or in the future we must use a balancing approach—that is, to balance the way forward for a positive society and certainly not promote gambling within the society but decrease it and also maintain the amount of money that these local clubs and societies in our electorates give to local communities which is a benefit.