



Speech by

Michael Crandon

MEMBER FOR COOMERA

Hansard Thursday, 8 October 2009

GAMBLING AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Mr CRANDON (Coomera—LNP) (12.10 pm): Some of the purposes of the Gambling and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2009 are to put a cap on gaming machines in clubs and reallocate gaming machines and to make it an offence to direct promotional material to excluded persons. There must be a balance between encouraging sensible industry development and promoting harm minimisation and protection for the community.

Gambling is a serious social issue. It is noted that revenue is not proportional to the amount invested in community protection against the dangers of excessive habitual participation. Recent applications for extended gambling hours in low socioeconomic areas is a despicable cash grab by those making applications. Thank goodness there has been a moratorium put in place so that the issue can be looked at properly. The last thing we want to see is an increase in machines in low socioeconomic areas. The member for Mermaid Beach referred to Logan City. The bottom end of Logan City is in my electorate.

On Wednesday, 2 September 2009 I wrote to the Queensland Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation's Office of Liquor and Gaming Regulation with a submission in relation to an application lodged. I registered my strong opposition to the request for extended licensing and gaming hours. The applicant's premises is located in an area that has a high proportion of people on low and very low incomes.

I said that this region has higher than average gaming expenditure when compared with the broader Queensland community. Any extension to gaming hours would only exacerbate the problem. I discussed the fact that the area is heavily weighted towards residential housing and extending the hours would place those with gambling issues under added pressure to stay away from their families for even longer periods.

To support my objection I provided some data sourced from the 2006 Australian census statistics and the 2006-07 gambling survey. According to the 2006 Australian census this area has some challenges with regard to affordability for such things as gambling. For example, the number of separated and divorced people in the area is 19.2 per cent compared to 11.3 per cent for the rest of Australia. The unemployment rate for the area at the time of the survey was 9.3 per cent compared to 5.2 per cent for the rest of Australia. Those in non-trade qualified blue-collar occupations—for example, machine operators—amount to 21 per cent of the population compared to 10.5 per cent for the rest of Australia. So the list goes on. The area was clearly doing it very tough.

How does this all relate to the problem of gambling? According to the Queensland housing gambling survey 2006-07, people in the higher risk gambling groups tend to gamble for longer sessions. The survey also indicates, among other things, that they gamble more often and participate for much longer each time. It also refers to the fact that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, an at-risk group, make up 2.9 per cent of the problem gambling group. This area has an Indigenous population around double the average.

In view of the time constraints, I will end there. But the point I wish to make very strongly is that we really do need to look very carefully at the gambling issue, particularly in those lower socioeconomic areas.