




Speech By  
**Rob Molhoek**

**MEMBER FOR SOUTHPORT**

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**MAJOR SPORTS FACILITIES AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr MOLHOEK** (Southport—LNP) (5.51 pm): I am pleased also as a member of the committee to rise to speak in support of the Major Sports Facilities and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. I will start by thanking the committee and the secretariat for the work that they have done. Some of the issues covered in this bill are actually quite personal issues for me in that I have had firsthand experience with some of the challenges of running a licensed club.

For my sins or otherwise, I was duly elected as the Juniors representative at the Runaway Bay Junior Leagues Club back in the late nineties at a time when the club was in financial administration. It was only with the support of a number of benefactors—and I want to particularly honour Robin Bycroft and I should also honour Paul Dostal, two of the principal benefactors who provided no-interest loans to that club for a period of three years.

**Mr Costigan:** What a helping hand that was.

**Mr MOLHOEK:** It was. I take the interjection from the member for Whitsunday. It was certainly a very generous gesture on their part and it made a real difference. I was co-opted on to the board by a very good friend of mine and a fellow father of a few juniors at the club Kevin Nichol, who was a local accountant and now runs a very successful accounting business here in Queensland. Along with Carol Diamond, who is one of the hardest working Rugby League volunteers in Queensland, and Des Guy, who joined us on the board and who is now one of the conditioning coaches with the Gold Coast Titans, for three years we toiled to run that club to get it back into profit, to run it lean and mean to ensure that we were able to pay that money back. I can tell you that there was no happier day in my life after three years of board meetings, struggling through that difficult financial situation, to be able to write that final cheque for about \$2.2 million and pay back all of the benefactors and lenders to the club.

I might also point out that about two weeks after that I resigned from the board because I never really wanted to be running a licensed gambling club. I was there because at the time I did not have the capacity to be out there as a Juniors coach or helping out with my sons' teams. I had four boys who played Rugby League there. One thing I could do was provide some support to the board and use my business acumen at the time to help out of an evening after work had concluded for the day back in the day when I was running Sea FM and Gold FM on the Gold Coast.

Had these provisions that are proposed in this legislation been available to us back then—and this is the point I am getting to—we could have entered into an arrangement with one of the other larger clubs within our catchment. They could have taken over some of the running of and the responsibility for the machines. They would have continued to support the lighting and some of the other costs that the club was providing to the Juniors. It would have been a fantastic outcome for the club. It would have meant that for three years we would not have gone through that great period of difficulty. It would have meant that for one of the larger clubs—I will not name them, but there was another club in the area at

the time that was very keen to come in and work with us but there were too many impediments in the way such that they were not able to provide that assistance. I can speak from firsthand experience and with real passion about the importance of this amendment.

I note, as my colleague from Redlands did also, that we did consult on this issue. We had some excellent submissions. We got some great advice from the department. In the submission from Clubs Queensland they pointed out that there are some 1,100 community clubs across Queensland. What is important to note—and there are challenges running these clubs, and that is why we need to help them with this amendment—is that since 1997 there has not been a new community club built anywhere in Queensland and that an average of 13 clubs close each year. That number has risen more recently to 17. This is an important amendment. Hopefully, by clubs being able to work together, by larger clubs being able to step in and bail out some of the smaller clubs, I think the changes proposed in this legislation will be a great incentive.

I also want to speak about the importance of the proposed changes in respect of the Major Sports Facilities Act, particularly the importance of protecting both sporting teams and major events and the owners of venues from what we used to call in the radio industry 'ambush marketing'. I want to take the parliament back to 1999 when the Gold Coast had just lost the Gold Coast Chargers. We had no decent stadium on the Gold Coast. The facility we had at Carrara was a lemon or a white elephant, so to speak. Around that time there was a group of us that created the Gold Coast stadium feasibility task force.

It was pointed out to us many times that one of the biggest challenges with stadiums is getting them to pay. Even the Queensland government has significant investment in the naming rights of stadiums all across the state. Back then there was no Metricon Stadium for the Gold Coast Suns. There was no Cbus Super Stadium for the Gold Coast Titans. What is important is making sure that we have a legislative head of power to protect those sponsorship rights and of course all of the other sponsors that put so much money and effort behind our local sporting teams and behind major events because without that support those events will not pay.

I started by saying that these are personal issues for me. As part of the original Gold Coast Titan bid team, I can tell you how hard it is to raise sponsorship. I have had personal experience of that. I can tell you how important it is to look after those sponsors. Through the early years before we got the NRL licence, raising sponsorship for those trial games and working with council in the old facility and having the support of council around naming rights and shared catering rights and some of the other sponsorship that was put in place, it was really important that we could assure our sponsors that there would be no ambush marketing of their events. I am happy to support the legislation.