




Speech By  
**Ali King**

**MEMBER FOR PUMICESTONE**

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### **CASINO CONTROL AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Ms KING** (Pumicestone—ALP) (6.34 pm): I am, as so often, completely staggered by the profound hypocrisy of the member for South Brisbane in her contribution. I note the public record demonstrates that around \$500,000 in professional gambling money has been contributed to the Greens political party. My understanding is that, at the last election in 2020, \$100,000 in professional gambling donations were made to the Greens political party for their state election campaign.

We have heard a lot of commentary about gambling and the gambling economy in Queensland but the member for South Brisbane has, as usual, told one side of the story—a heavily politicised side of the story—and completely fails to be transparent about the role of professional gambling donations in supporting Greens party political campaigns. I call upon her to apologise for the hypocrisy she has demonstrated in this place and that she demonstrates every single time she stands up and attempts to lecture the government about gambling.

Turning to the long title of the bill, as the Attorney-General and Minister Grace have both noted, the ability to conduct casino gaming is a lucrative privilege, not a right. It is bestowed only through licences issued by the state, and as such it is profoundly appropriate that casino entities meet stringent requirements that enhance accountability and transparency in their dealings. While casinos generate significant economic activity and very welcome employment, they also pose very real risks around organised criminal activity and harm from unsafe gambling and gambling addiction. I will admit to being something of a prude when it comes to gambling. I am one of those people who makes a \$5 bet at Melbourne Cup Day once a year and does not take it any further. At times I have been really distressed by the impact of problem gambling on community members.

Casino operators and licensees should be required to meet the highest possible standards of integrity, governance, transparency and compliance to reduce those risks and protect the community. Many Queenslanders love a bet, but they do expect that casino entities are subject to strict integrity frameworks. This bill as introduced makes significant strides on that. I note the Attorney-General's intention to move amendments that further strengthen that integrity framework for casino operations in Queensland.

Like so many of us, I have been troubled by reports across several Australian jurisdictions of practices by casino operators that range from unethical and exploitative to frankly criminal. They include links to international organised crime, money laundering and schemes to avoid rules designed to minimise gambling harms. Those actions have led to wideranging inquiries which I have welcomed. I am heartened by the thoroughness of several reports, including the Finkelstein inquiry, the Bergin inquiry, the Bell inquiry, the Owen inquiry and most recently—and most relevant to Queensland—the Gotterson inquiry which was handed down earlier this month. I am heartened by the thoroughness of those reports and the readiness of regulators and state governments to take action.

While this bill was introduced prior to the completion of the Gotterson investigation into Star and did not pre-empt the findings of that investigation, I welcome its measures to ensure stronger integrity, accountability and transparency by casinos. Even more, I welcome the amendments to the bill

foreshadowed by the Attorney-General in response to the recommendations of the Gotterson report. Contrary to the views expressed by LNP members of the Legal Affairs and Safety Committee in their statement of reservation, I believe that the steps taken to commence the reform process prior to the release of the Gotterson report were justified by the seriousness of the information on hand when the original bill was drafted. Reform was urgently needed, so our government acted.

The government has accepted in principle the 12 recommendations of the Gotterson report, and now the urgent amendments foreshadowed by the Attorney-General demonstrate that it was possible to get on with the job of introducing initial reforms while still being responsive to the recommendations of the Gotterson report. This bill and amendments act to address the serious issues raised in the various inquiries. They include: new and higher penalties for serious breaches of the law; expanding information-gathering powers and information disclosure duties; imposing duties on casino entities to self-report contraventions and breaches; complying with reasonable requests by the minister or regulator; and to do everything necessary to ensure that casinos are managed and operated fairly and honestly.

Importantly, the bill also introduces a framework for stronger harm minimisation measures to be introduced by subordinate legislation. That is so that the subordinate legislation can properly respond to the very diverse business environments of gambling venues—whether it be a small country pub, a large hotel in my electorate or a CBD casino.

Several specific issues attracted submitter comment during the committee's inquiry into the bill. That commentary included suggestions that the maximum financial penalty available against casinos should be raised from \$50 million to \$100 million. I welcome the Attorney-General's intention to introduce that amendment because I believe it will ensure that penalties are not, to quote the Gotterson report, 'seen as a manageable cost of doing business'. The increased penalty recognises the large financial resources of casino entities and sets a powerful deterrent to proscribed activities.

Other submitters, including the Queensland Law Society, gave feedback that they wanted to see the bill go further in progressing a single national approach to fundraising regulation for charities. The amendments proposed in this bill do take steps towards reforms that will address inconsistencies in the regulation of fundraising across borders, while other reforms to harmonise charity reporting requirements and regulate how fundraising is conducted will be progressed separately. In December 2021 the Council on Federal Financial Relations and National Cabinet agreed to develop a national fundraising framework to reduce red tape. The Department of Justice and Attorney-General have committed to continue work with the interjurisdictional fundraising working group to harmonise that national regulation of charitable fundraising with appropriate regard to cross-border legislation and Australian consumer protection principles.

This important bill will substantially strengthen the integrity framework for casino entities in Queensland. I welcome these important reforms and I commend the bill to the House.