



Speech By
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MEMBER FOR SOUTH BRISBANE

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APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL (NO. 3)

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BETTING TAX AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Dr MacMAHON** (South Brisbane—Grn) (8.07 pm): Gambling conglomerates are making a motza off Queenslanders' losses and the government says they want to make them pay their fair share, but that is not what this bill does. In the introductory speech to the bill, the Treasurer talked about the massive revenue that those companies are making. He talked of global revenue of \$2 billion for Entain Group and \$2.5 billion for Flutter Entertainment just last year. He said that the government wants these huge multinational companies to pay their fair share.

What does this government think is a fair share for those billion dollar companies to pay? How much extra tax will this bill make those international mega-corporations pay on their betting revenue? Twice as much? That seems fair, but no. Half as much? Not even that. This bill will ask those gambling conglomerates, which are making a huge amount of money off Queenslanders, to pay a measly five per cent more on their revenue in taxes. I say 'ask' because the betting tax is a self-reporting tax with, it seems, no actual means to determine how much revenue those companies suck out of the pockets of Queenslanders and with no obligation for the companies to even make any real effort to find out. Because of the self-reporting, we do not even know if those companies will bother to pay this extra tax.

In fact, there is definitely one gambling giant that will not be paying any more under this bill and that, of course, is Tabcorp—a regular customer for political favours and handouts from the LNP and Labor. The government has a specialised agreement with Tabcorp which, in this legislation, requires Tabcorp to pay fees on their UBET products, which is effectively a tax to Racing Queensland. In 2019, when Tabcorp refused to pay the full amount of their taxes, Racing Queensland took them to court. The litigation continued until this year when the government, which hates to see its good friends in the gambling industry argue with its own governing bodies, decided to step in and cut Tabcorp a nice, juicy deal. Under this new agreement, this government has agreed to give Tabcorp a \$30 million tax break under this bill. The ever appreciative Tabcorp has returned the favour, giving Queensland Labor \$14,000 in donations since the government brokered this deal.

To reiterate, the way this government wants to hold billion dollar multinational gambling conglomerates accountable is to increase their revenue taxes a measly five per cent, with no guarantee that they will actually pay, and give their corporate donor Tabcorp a \$30 million tax break. Let us pretend for a minute that the gambling giants will actually pay this extra tax and that the extra revenue would be more than a ridiculous tax break this government wants to give its friends at Tabcorp. What exactly does the government want to do with this extra revenue? Will it put it towards fully funding public education and meeting the government's obligations under the Schooling Resources Standard? Will it

improve wages for nurses to keep them from departing the profession? What about building public homes in a state with some of Australia's worst housing crisis? No, the government plans to give all of the additional revenue—and more—to Queensland racing.

Under this bill, Queensland racing will receive 80 per cent of the betting revenue compared to 35 per cent currently. This represents an estimated \$50 million extra in public money. What is even the point? The government wants to take money from the gambling corporations only to give it back to Racing Queensland to promote gambling and to run the races for it. We know where this money is coming from: straight out of the pockets of Queenslanders.

The evidence shows that the hardest hit by the predatory gambling industry are those who are already vulnerable. Queenslanders suffering from generational and acute poverty, trauma, addiction, mental health and other illnesses are more likely to be victims of exploitative gambling corporations. We also know that the insidious reach of the gambling industry touches all parts of society, with thousands of childhoods ruined, family houses sold off and small businesses sunk as loved ones fall prey to the predatory gambling industry which promotes addictive gambling, all of which is supported by this by government and by Racing Queensland.

If the government wanted to help Queenslanders, it would not be gifting Racing Queensland \$80 million a year to promote racing and gambling. If it were worried about mega gambling corporations walking away with Queenslanders' money, it would not just tax them a smidge more; it would increase it further and look at tackling their predatory behaviour.

If the government really cared about Queenslanders losing out to gambling conglomerates, it would ban these billion dollar companies from using professional and community supporting clubs to push gambling onto the community. The government would use this \$80 million to support our community sports clubs—from the small clubs like the Kangaroo Point Rovers in my electorate to the Brisbane Broncos—so that Queenslanders would not have to rely on the rotten money of gambling corporations like Tabcorp in order to play and enjoy sports.

We know what the scourge of government backed gambling looks like. Children's sporting heroes have becoming walking billboards for gambling, with Ladbrokes and Sportsbet advertisements paid for by those multimillion dollar corporations making a billion dollars a year in revenue. They line the local footy fields, and families are bombarded by pro-gambling propaganda in their homes.

Government members interjected.

Dr MacMAHON: I am sorry, Mr Deputy Speaker, I can barely hear myself over the gambling racket.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Martin): Order, members! I will wait for silence. I ask that the member for South Brisbane be heard in silence. She is not taking interjections.

Dr MacMAHON: Instead of supporting this predatory industry we could be giving \$80 million to support sport in this state—actual sport—so that clubs do not have to rely on gambling money. Instead, this government wants to put \$80 million a year towards organised horse flogging and dog killing, which will only see more money sucked out of Queensland communities by gambling companies. It is not like they need any more money. A brief glance at Racing Queensland's board will give members a pretty good indication of what they are and who they represent. Racing Queensland's chair is the founder of a billion dollar investment firm, and its board members include a property tycoon as well as former LNP mayor Graham Quirk, who now breeds horses for blood sport—just delightful.

While it is working people who are disproportionately harmed by the predatory gambling industry, Racing Queensland includes some of the richest in the state. Racing is run by elites for elites. Labor wants to give its powerful friends \$80 million a year for this rich man's hobby. We know what the government's arguments are for propping up this business of its mates in these big businesses: it creates jobs. It may be the case that pouring millions of dollars into anything creates jobs, but I am not sure that jobs knocking down a koala habitat in Ipswich, for example, for a greyhound track or slaughtering injured racehorses for pet food are the kinds of jobs that we should be prioritising—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, members! Pause the clock. The level of discussion amongst members has got too high. I cannot hear the member for South Brisbane. I will wait for silence.

Dr MacMAHON: As I was saying, I am not sure that jobs knocking down koala habitat for a greyhound track or slaughtering injured racehorses for pet food are the kinds of jobs that we should be prioritising when there are so many better opportunities and when we are crying out for support in our housing sector and our healthcare sector.

I have already mentioned it, but \$80 million is enough to give every child under the age of 14 a \$140 voucher to pay for a local sporting club membership. This would be transformative for hundreds of thousands of Queensland families. In terms of music, arts and culture, this \$80 million a year to the

gambling and racing industry is almost twice the core funding the government gives to arts and cultural organisations in the state. I guarantee members that there will be many more Queenslanders who will be having a beer and listening to local music at the pub, visiting a public museum or participating in street festivals than there are people sipping champagne at the racecourse or, by comparison, the wonderful creatives, organisers and other workers in the arts sector who get an absolute pittance in support from this government.

If it were not embarrassing enough for this government to pander to the racing industry, it has decided to tie these changes to the betting and racing acts to totally unrelated changes to payroll tax administration which is needed to implement the mental health levy. The mental health levy, as we all know, will not even provide half of the funding required to meet the mental health needs of Queenslanders. How this government can announce a record mental health budget, underfund the system by hundreds of millions of dollars a year and then turn around and ban the United Nations Subcommittee on the Prevention of Torture from visiting our mental health facilities with no clear legislative basis makes even less sense. Tying administrative changes needed to fund this small boost to mental health funding in a bill which is largely about handouts to Tabcorp and the racing industry is shameful. The Queensland Greens fully support this boost to mental health funding. We support making Labor Party donors and the rest of the gambling industry pay their fair share, but this bill is an insult to Queenslanders.