




Speech By
Cynthia Lui

MEMBER FOR COOK

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CASINO CONTROL AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Ms LUI** (Cook—ALP) (6.49 pm): I rise to speak on the Casino Control and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2022. In doing so, I would like to acknowledge the Attorney-General, committee chair Peter Russo, members of the Legal Affairs and Safety Committee, committee secretariat and Hansard for their work in the examination of the bill.

The bill implements a range of reforms relevant to the regulation of liquor, gaming and fair trading in Queensland. The amendments in the bill are to: ensure casino integrity and modernise gambling legislation; introduce a framework for wagering on simulated events; extend New Year's Eve gaming hours; and introduce a cross-border recognition scheme for charitable fundraising.

The objectives of the bill as it relates to casino and gambling regulations are to: strengthen casino integrity and regulation in Queensland; remove certain redundant requirements under the Casino Control Act 1982; remove an identified human rights incompatibility under the Casino Control Act; and modernise the Casino Control Act, Casino Control Regulation 1999, Charitable and Non-Profit Gaming Act 1999, Gaming Machine Act 1991, Interactive Gambling (Player Protection) Act 1998, Keno Act 1996, Lotteries Act 1997, Wagering Act 1998 and Wagering Regulation 1999 as required to improve regulatory agility, address cashless gambling and enable gambling rules to be notified on a departmental website.

This bill aims to strengthen casino integrity and regulation in Queensland to ensure the operation of a casino remains free from criminal influence. Media allegations of money laundering, criminal infiltration and other integrity issues have, over the last 2½ years, prompted several major public inquiries and regulator and law enforcement investigations into casinos operated by subsidiaries of Crown Resorts Ltd and the Star Entertainment Group Ltd in multiple jurisdictions. Tougher gambling laws means tougher measures to ensure compliance requirements are met with increased penalties and pushes for more gambling harm minimisation measures.

Some of the allegations as they pertain to Crown subsidiaries have been substantiated by the Bergin inquiry in New South Wales, the Finkelstein inquiry in Victoria and the Owen inquiry in Western Australia which have resulted in those Crown subsidiaries being found unfit to hold casino licences in those states. Other allegations in relation to Star's subsidiaries are still being examined by multiple regulator and law enforcement agencies including by the Australian Transaction Reports and Analysis Centre and the New South Wales Independent Liquor and Gaming Authority, which has established an independent investigation into the Star Sydney casino, chaired by Mr Adam Bell SC.

These events suggest that the wider casino sector should be subject to stronger regulatory scrutiny to ensure casinos operate with the highest standards of integrity and accountability at all times. Although Crown has no presence in the Queensland casino environment, Star, through subsidiaries, is the licensee and operator of Treasury Brisbane and the Star Gold Coast. Additionally, Star has a stake in Destination Brisbane Consortium Integrated Resort Operations Pty Ltd, the licensee of the Star Brisbane, and will operate the new casino on behalf of DBC when it is anticipated to open in 2023.

The committee highlight in their report Star's advice that it has had a number of minor breaches for such matters as an exclusion or a staff error on tables over the last five years and that it had not paid any fines for these breaches.

To ensure that failings of the kind found by the Bergin, Finkelstein and Owen inquiries do not become prevalent in Queensland, the bill enhances the Casino Control Act by: introducing and increasing penalties for critical offences to ensure there are meaningful consequences for breaches of the law; imposing a requirement on particular entities to self-report contraventions of the law and breaches of certain prescribed agreements to which they are a party, and to comply with all reasonable requests made by the minister or regulator under the act and do everything necessary to ensure that the management and operations of the casino operator are conducted honestly and fairly; and expanding information-gathering powers and introducing other powers which are considered necessary to reflect the complexity of regulating casinos in current times.

The government is looking into the future by modernising the Casino Control Act. On 27 July 2021, the government released its four-year plan to prevent and minimise gambling harm. This is a significant step towards minimising the risk of harm caused by gambling because, as we all know, gambling remains easily accessible to everyone and unfortunately, if not controlled, it has the potential to destroy lives.

The Gambling Harm Minimisation Plan for Queensland 2021-2025 seeks to shift the focus away from 'responsible gambling' to 'safer gambling', recognising that a safer gambling environment requires collaborative effort between industry, community and government beyond placing the sole responsibility on gamblers to undertake responsible gambling. This is a good, sensible bill and I commend this bill to the House.