



Speech By  
**Trevor Watts**


**MEMBER FOR TOOWOOMBA NORTH**

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Record of Proceedings, 14 October 2022

## **MENTAL HEALTH SELECT COMMITTEE**

### **Report, Motion to Take Note**

 **Mr WATTS** (Toowoomba North—LNP) (4.11 pm): I rise to make a brief contribution to the Casino Control and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2022. Governance is really important, whether we are talking about the state, businesses or corporations, and it is particularly so when a corporation presents a potential risk. The governance and the governance controls around a casino are fundamentally important because this is where there is an opportunity for a lot of cash to change hands and it is where the government has made significant legislative concessions to stimulate activity in the CBD.

The framework that exists to protect the state and all Queenslanders from wrongdoing is fundamentally important, yet we find this Labor government were far too slow to this party. They took forever to come up with some legislative framework that would be able to be held above reproach, and then as they were trying to achieve that outcome they have rushed it in. We have had 27 pages of amendments come in 30 minutes before a very serious discussion about some very serious breaches of governance and controls, including potential criminal activity, money laundering and other such things. They have completely avoided the scrutiny of our committee system, which was established some years ago to try to stop this kind of poor governance that we see from this government.

We have seen the government abuse their numbers in this place to crunch through some amendments that have avoided the scrutiny of the people of Queensland and other potential stakeholders who might have had some opinions on them. We will never know what those opinions might have been before this becomes law because this government will use their numbers to force this House to their will. That is poor governance. We have legislation that was too slow and then it was rushed and is half-baked, and now it is not going to do the job it was supposed to do.

The government engaged in a couple of steps along the way. When there are governance breaches and failures interstate and there is a massive investment going on in our CBD from an organisation that seemed to be involved in some very shadowy activity interstate, wouldn't it be a good idea to have a review? A review would always be useful when it comes to these things. We hear those on the other side always going on about the Fitzgerald review that was held in this state many years ago. That was all encompassing, without limitations, and it allowed people to pursue whatever they needed to. It found a lot of bad things and it then brought some suggestions forward.

What happens when there is a political fix around a review? What would be the purpose of a government wanting a political fix around a review? We have seen this tactic several times and the people of Queensland need to understand this tactic. In the media cycle we have these days—particularly if you have 30 or more spinners able to get your story out—when a review is announced, people might think, 'Maybe we should trust them. They're going to review it. That sounds great.' However, what people miss is the terms of reference. When there is a very narrow terms of reference that prevents the examination of one of the offices that is a regulatory authority and its behaviour towards the organisation, when the review is not allowed to look at the deep pockets of money linked

directly to the government that is then providing the regulatory framework for the organisation that has been found to be corrupt and in breach in other states, we have to ask whether the review was just a simple political fix. Was it some wallpapering over the cracks of potential corrupt behaviour and some poor governance that is in place? The review that we had, which was, if I can say it correctly—

**Mr Power:** The Gotterson review.

**Mr WATTS:** Thank you, member for Logan. The member for Logan has finally been able to contribute something worthwhile in this House and I appreciate it. It is certainly his finest contribution today. There is no doubt about that.

Casinos run well with good governance structures, with proper government regulation and with the ability for parts of government to let the light in and show what is happening. When that happens, they can be a great asset for the state. They present an opportunity for people to enjoy all that Brisbane or the Gold Coast has from a tourism point of view. Unfortunately, we do not have a casino in Toowoomba. We do have poker machines. I am sure our racetrack in Toowoomba would love to have a little boutique casino, but the people of Toowoomba would not want that unless there was a decent regulatory framework—unless there was the ability to let the light in and make sure there was no political interference and make sure such an organisation was not lining the pockets of people who then lined the pockets of the Labor Party.

**Mr Power** interjected.

**Mr WATTS:** We can discuss people who go to casinos and eat at their public restaurants. I am happy to discuss that. I think that would be a wonderful thing for people to do. I have been to level 19 and had a drink up there. It is a great view and it was a great opportunity to spend time with friends whilst I was on the Gold Coast. I do not see there is any problem with that at all, and I would encourage everybody to go and look at the great facility down there. What the member for Logan fails to realise is that going to a public restaurant in a casino is not a criminal activity or a risk of corruption.

However, if you are in charge of the regulatory authority in a ministerial position and you have one of your lobbyists who also is involved and you are then having functions put on and legislation is being presented and/or very slowly coming forward, people are going to ask questions. That is a terrible thing for people to ask questions of the government that they have elected. The way to avoid that is to make sure that any reviews we have are wide-scoping and that they let the light in so that all of the people of Queensland and all of the people of this House can be reassured that there was nothing untoward and that there was nothing inappropriate going on.

We have seen, from this organisation, that there has been inappropriate things going on. We have to make sure that we have a structure written into legislation in this state to protect the interests of Queenslanders, to protect the interests of individuals, and to make sure that these organisations run in the best interests of our state and not the best interests of those in power, not the best interests of those who write the regulatory framework for them, not the best interests of their lobbyists, and not the best interests of any overseas people who might be trying to evade tax and/or other legislation.

The summary of this is really simple: first of all, it was too slow, and that leaves a window of opportunity for very poor behaviour, albeit potentially criminal, potentially corrupt. Then all of a sudden this is rushed through which means we do not let the light in; we do not get an opportunity to see and understand the kind of activity that has been going on. Then when it comes into this place, what we find is that it is half-baked and that some of the organisations still do not have to publish the things that the people of Queensland should know about. I thank the member for Logan for completely disrupting this House through the entire time.