




Speech By
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CASINO CONTROL AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr HUNT** (Caloundra—ALP) (6.46 pm): I rise to make a contribution on the Casino Control and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2023. I thank my fellow committee members: Peter Russo, the member for Toohey; Jonty Bush, the member for Cooper; Steve Andrew, the member for Mirani; Mark Boothman, the member for Theodore—

Mr Andrew: Thanks, mate.

Mr HUNT:—you are very welcome—and last of all Jon Krause, the member for Scenic Rim. I also acknowledge the contributions of Sandy Bolton, the member for Noosa, and Laura Gerber, the softly-spoken member for Currumbin, who were both committee members when the subsequent report was written. The secretariat was invaluable as always and I thank it for its efforts.

Gambling is a tricky proposition for our society. At its most benign it is an entertaining distraction and a leisure activity so passive that you can indulge in it while enjoying other leisure activities. At its most insidious it is a highly addictive destroyer of lives, laying waste to entire families and leaving misery and self-inflicted destitution in its wake. To that end, it is entirely reasonable that it be subject to strict controls and rigorous examination. The purpose of the bill is very simple—to facilitate the implementation of recommendations 1 to 11 of the *External review of the Queensland operations of the Star Entertainment Group Limited* which was led by the Hon. Robert Gotterson. To that end, the committee has made a single recommendation, and that is that the bill be passed. The Casino Control Act 1982 will be amended to implement such things as: introducing mandatory carded play; implementing cashless gaming for transactions over \$1,000; mandatory and binding precommitment, including play and break limits; providing for the collection of mandatory carded data play and making this data available to inform research and casino supervision; establishing a compulsory code of conduct for the gambling sector; creating a supervision levy for casino owners; introducing a cost recoverable periodic review for casinos; and creating a new mandatory category for excluding notices for those excluded from casinos by an interstate police commissioner.

My own father was brought up in the household of a problem gambler. He recalled one day coming home from school to find two men rolling up the lino in the kitchen because his dad—my pop—had lost the equivalent value in a poker game. On another occasion my dad's school friends found him out the front of his house cutting the lawn with scissors—not as a special punishment but because his own father had lost the family push mower to gambling. This is indicative of the beginnings of problem gambling, but for many families losing the kitchen lino would be the least of their worries.

One of the Gotterson recommendations called for carded play, also known as card-based gaming. This requires a person to swipe or tap a card before they can gamble—and importantly this includes instances where they are playing with cash—on the basis that it can assist with the detection of patterns of gambling which may be indicative of gambling harm, allow for the collection of particular player data and identify and prevent self-excluders from gambling.

Gotterson also advocated for cashless gambling in casinos, save for transactions of \$1,000 or less, as a means of reducing incidences of money laundering and enhancing the ability to trace, monitor and control patterns of gambling and gambling spending. We also know that limits and breaks are an important part in the struggle to mitigate problem gambling. We know that preset limits and levels are vital. Everything about a casino is designed to enhance the gambling experience. Gamblers are encouraged to eat, play, drink, shop and even seek accommodation, all in the casino. International casinos have commissioned comprehensive studies into what fragrances lure, attract and contain gamblers, so taking a break is vital—a break from the lights, the sounds, the smell, the carnival atmosphere and, most importantly, a break in the momentum of gaming. This, too, was the subject of recommendations.

The bill provides that a regulation may provide that a person may not be allowed to play a stated game or carry out a stated activity associated with playing a game in a stated casino other than under a precommitment system in accordance with the regulation. This is to facilitate the implementation of recommendations 3 and 4 of the review as it relates to full, mandatory and binding precommitment and play and break limits. A regulation may prescribe a range of matters relating to precommitment systems, including the types of precommitment limits which must be made available, how precommitment limits are to be measured, a period to which precommitment limits apply and ways of accessing a precommitment system. A casino operator must ensure a person does not play a prescribed game or carry out a prescribed activity in a casino other than under a precommitment system in accordance with the regulation.

Stakeholder feedback was pretty consistent across the hearing. The Alliance for Gambling Reform strongly supports gambling products having mandatory identity linked cards with the objective of both minimising gambling harm and preventing money laundering, although it did go further and note that cards should be linked to a third-party self-exclusion register and that the card system must be linked to all gambling products, including Keno and sport or race wagering. By way of response, DJAG provided that other jurisdictions undertaking similar reforms are not initially capturing Keno and wagering and that if mandatory carded play was to be applied to Keno and wagering in casinos in the future it would be appropriate to do so through the Keno and wagering acts. In its own comments, the committee noted that the committee recognises the difficulty in applying a new regulatory framework across multiple schemes simultaneously. Keno and wagering systems in Brisbane have their own statutory framework and regulations. The bill is aimed at casinos, as were the recommendations made by the Gotterson review. The committee recognises the potential to expand this framework to other areas once it is rolled out, but that is not the objective of this bill.

What has become apparent through both the Gotterson report and the committee process is that the success of many of the recommendations will rest on data collection, particularly as they pertain to periods of play—as in date, start time and end time—player turnover, player losses and wins. From this we heard the concerns raised by the Office of the Information Commissioner, who was worried about the private and personal information collected as a result of mandatory carded play. The OIC stated that information collected should be limited to what is strictly necessary to establish players' credentials and that personal information must be adequately secured and only used for legislative processes—namely, harm minimisation and prevention of criminal activity. There should be appropriate restrictions to prevent card data being used for unrelated marketing schemes or loyalty and reward schemes. The department provided that these points could be addressed via measures that included the fact that the bill has measures to ensure the regulator can access player card information regularly and at any time. It also required casino operators to give regular reports containing deidentified player card information to the chief executive at the times prescribed by the regulation. Further, it authorises the chief executive to request player card information from casino operators by a stated day and provides the chief executive with access to particular electronic casino control systems.

Finally, I would touch on the recommendations as they pertain to a code of conduct. The explanatory notes make very plain that the Gotterson review found staff to have a poor corporate culture and attitudes towards compliance. The Gotterson review also found some of Star's actions to be misleading and insufficiently transparent. A code of conduct covering standards of behaviour in key areas of casino regulation would assist and enhance integrity, minimise the potential for harm and restore public confidence.

The bill amends the Casino Control Act to create a regulation-making power to provide for a compulsory code of conduct for casino operators, in accordance with recommendation 8 of Gotterson's review. The code may impose regulations on casino operators, their employees and agents to ensure safer gambling in casinos. It may also impose obligations to ensure the appropriate conduct of casino operations and the implementation of appropriate practices, systems and procedures relating to the

governance, accountability and integrity of casino operators. The recommendations surrounding cards, spending limits and anti-money-laundering measures are all very intelligent amendments, but a code of conduct will hold casinos to a standard that they very clearly need to be held to. On that basis, I commend the bill to the House.