




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR COOPER

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CASINO CONTROL AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Ms BUSH** (Cooper—ALP) (11.33 am): I rise also to make a contribution to the casino control bill. Before I get to the substance of the bill I am inclined to comment on the contributions made by those opposite in yesterday's session. We can see already where they are going with the criticism and the complaints that the bill has taken too long and it has not gone far enough. Does anyone in this House seriously think that this bill would be before this House if those opposite were in power?

They did not introduce one piece of legislation when they were in power relating to casino regulation—sorry, I will correct the record. They did introduce one piece of legislation relating to casino regulation. They introduced the Liquor and Gaming (Red Tape Reduction) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill, which according to the explanatory notes was about reducing the regulatory burden on the liquor and gaming industry. If anybody thinks that they would be moving on this in the way that we are, they would be incorrect.

Those opposite are saying that it has taken too long for this bill to come before this House. What they are not saying is which bills they would have pushed back in order to bring this one bill forward. Would they have pushed back our nation-leading coercive control bill, leaving Queensland women less safe? Would they have pushed back our midwife-to-baby ratio legislation? We know how they feel about nurses and midwives. The shadow minister for health came in here and referred to regional nurses as 'duds'. We know that when they were in government they sacked over 4,000 healthcare workers and they have not ruled out doing that again. Maybe it was that piece of legislation they would have pushed back to introduce this piece of legislation.

Actually, I know what it would have been. I think it would have been our legislation that we introduced into this House and debated to provide women in the regions greater control over their reproductive rights. We know how the Leader of the Opposition feels about that. Those opposite voted against giving women the choice to access early and safe termination of pregnancy. The Leader of the Opposition has not ruled out winding back the laws on safe termination of pregnancy in Queensland if he were to become Premier in October, which absolutely terrifies me.

Mr WEIR: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order under standing order 118(b). There is nothing I have heard so far that is relevant to the bill that is being debated at the moment.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Lister): I have to agree with the member for Condamine. You have strayed quite a long way from the substance of the bill. I would invite you to return to the long title, member for Cooper.

Ms BUSH: It is about priorities and which piece of legislation we would be debating if we were not debating this bill. I am terrified for all women in Queensland about what those opposite would do if they were to get into power in October. All women in Queensland ought to be terrified, too. Those opposite who made their contribution yesterday, which I am directly responding to now in my contribution, said that this bill did not go far enough. Let's not forget they never did anything to address casino regulation when they were in power, so do we really think that the Leader of the Opposition would have a position on this?

Mr WEIR: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order, again under 118(b), relevance to the bill.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Cooper, you have continued to stray away from the substance of the bill. I understand you are responding to remarks made earlier in the debate, but it is important that you do remain relevant. I would invite you to return to relevance.

Ms BUSH: I will address that. The point I will make is that we would not be debating this bill in this House under those opposite. It is only a Labor government that is willing and able to take on gambling reform in Queensland.

Gambling is a major public policy issue in Australia. It affects individuals, families and communities with estimates that Australians lose \$25 billion each year in gambling losses. Australia has the unenviable reputation of representing the largest per capita losses in the world. I want to jump straight in here and acknowledge Tim Costello, the former CEO of World Vision Australia and chief advocate for the Alliance for Gambling Reform, who made submissions to the committee which I am sure we would all agree were incredibly helpful. I will quote something he said in the public hearing that illustrated the very serious nature of Australia's relationship with gambling. He said—

... the American blind spot of guns is perplexing to us. The rest of the world looks at us and cannot believe the level of gambling losses. It is our blind spot ... I use the guns analogy because what happened here was effectively like the guns analogy. You have a second amendment, which is that every American has the right to a ball and musket rifle. That second amendment ... became semiautomatics and the right to carry them. What happened with pokies is that they went from coin operated and pulling a lever, where they did ... hardly any damage at all. Once they were digital they became like the semiautomatic rifle and regulation just did not keep up with the freedom to play.

The amendments contained in this bill are aimed at minimising the destructive impact of problem gambling and criminal influences inside casinos and I am proud to support them. The bill will facilitate the implementation of recommendations 1 to 11 within the Gotterson review, including introducing mandatory carded play; implementing cashless gambling for transactions over \$1,000; mandatory and binding precommitment, including play and break limits; providing for the collection of mandatory carded play data and making this data available to inform research and casino supervision; and establishing a compulsory code of conduct for the sector. Gotterson's recommendation that the Casino Control Act be amended to reflect these requirements, which are consistent with enhanced integrity, probity and harm minimisation as well as increased public confidence, is enabling us to introduce some really important reforms today in Queensland.

Arguably, the most important aspect of the bill provides a framework for carded play, cash limits and precommitment, play and break limits. This framework is in the form of a regulation that may prescribe a range of matters. The key features around full, mandatory and binding precommitment that includes play and break limits will have a significant impact on reducing gambling harm. We heard during the public hearings about the need to create friction in the passage of play for those gambling, and 'friction' was explained to us as a level of restriction that makes it difficult to be harmed. In terms of carded play we heard you can add friction and reduce harm caused to others by adding these additional steps, so making it harder for people to gamble easily, to lose big and to exceed limits and lose quickly. This creates opportunities for gamblers to pause and consider, 'What's my limit, what can I afford to lose and what's the impact on my relationships and my life?' These steps create friction in the process and enable players to make really different choices.

The bill provides that a regulation may prescribe a maximum limit on the number of cash transactions that a person may carry out in a prescribed casino within a 24-hour period. Currently the Casino Control Act does not require the collection of player data, and we heard that that is a real issue. Accordingly, the Gotterson review recommended that player cards collect data on things like the time that players participate, their spending, times of play, wins and losses. The review further recommended that data collected should be used for the purposes of research and to inform casino staffing levels and the proper supervision of casino activities. The bill will make those amendments. This was supported by the Alliance, which noted that the evidence often lacking in gambling research is due to independent researchers and governments not being able to access a deidentified gambler's data. It strongly supported the provision of deidentified data from the card system being made available.

Finally, the bill seeks to remove stigmatising language like 'problem gambler' from the act. This was again supported by the Alliance, which shared with the committee—

Gambling ... causes everything from increased domestic violence, financial distress, mental health problems, anxiety, depression—everything through to suicide. We know there is significant harm from suicide related to gambling ... All of those things are better served if we are approaching this from a public health perspective that accepts it is a harmful product, we should be mindful of the language we use around this, and it is not about blaming the individual. It is about acknowledging that Australia, as the country with the biggest losses in the world by a mile compared to the next country, is obviously experiencing a normalisation of gambling that does cause a great deal of harm as well.

The work to reform gambling and to improve our national picture on this is far from over, but we are taking another important step in the right direction through this bill. I commend the bill to the House.