

Question on Notice

No. 305

Asked on Wednesday, 8 March 2006

Mrs C SULLIVAN asked the Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for State Development, Trade and Innovation (MS BLIGH) –

QUESTION:

What effect will the Opposition's gambling policy have on the community, particularly, those non-profit groups which rely on money from the Gambling Community Benefit Fund?

ANSWER:

The Opposition's new gambling policy announced in December 2005, would see the number of gaming machines in Queensland reduced by 20%. While seemingly attractive, the policy will have an overwhelmingly negative effect on non-profit groups which rely on money from the Gambling Community Benefit Fund to help provide community and sporting facilities and services to Queenslanders.

The Gambling Community Benefit Fund provides grants to non-profit organisations across Queensland with grant allocations provided from gambling taxation revenue. Since 1994, the Gambling Community Benefit Fund has provided over \$280 million worth of grants for 27,267 community and sporting projects right across Queensland. In the three months to December 2005 alone, the Gambling Community Benefit Fund provided \$8.9 million to 568 community organisations across Queensland.

The grants scheme is very successful with strong competition for funds from a large number of organisations. Any reduction in funding as suggested by the Opposition's new policy will decrease the number of worthy community and sporting projects able to receive grant funding. The Opposition's new gambling policy will strip approximately \$65 million from gambling taxation revenues resulting in about \$5.6 million less for the Gambling Community Benefit Fund. This equates to 545 community and sporting projects each year that will not receive funding that they would have otherwise received.

In addition to the loss of gambling taxes, the Opposition's policy would also require a buyout of 20% gaming machines, creating a compensation bill for the Government of nearly \$600 million. That would lead to a direct reduction in Government funding for other services and projects.

The Opposition's gambling policy is just the latest example of why they are not ready for Government.

In contrast, the Government supports a balanced approach to gaming machines, involving small growth in machine numbers in line with population growth and a robust Responsible Gambling Policy to avoid problem gambling.