



Speech by

**RACHEL NOLAN**

**MEMBER FOR IPSWICH**

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Hansard 4 June 2003

**GAMING MACHINE AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

**Ms NOLAN** (Ipswich—ALP) (9.51 p.m.): I rise to add my support to the Gaming Machine and Other Legislation Amendment Bill brought to the House by the Treasurer. The bill arises from the statewide cap on the total number of gaming machines in hotels that the Treasurer announced in May 2001. Since the date that cap was applied, it has been impossible for hotels to increase the number of gaming machines they have, except for the few who already had applications in the system.

While I have a background in gaming policy, I am not a fan of poker machines. When I go to the pubs and clubs that have pokies in any electorate, I have mixed feelings. During the day most of the people who are coming and going are retired people and I think it is great that they have quality facilities in which to meet. Maybe without machines they would be at home and socially isolated, but maybe without the machines they would be doing something more active together—talking to each other and not to a machine.

My natural opposition to gaming machines was really confirmed when the parliament sat in Townsville last year and members stayed at the Jupiters Casino. As we came and went from parliament I was disturbed to see the traffic of people, many of them looking pretty unhappy and certainly not in a position to throw their money away, streaming in and out of that casino. The growth of gaming machines in Queensland has been fuelled by what seems to be an almost insatiable public demand and by the ridiculously limited revenue raising opportunities the Constitution allows the states. While I am enough of a realist not to suggest that it would be a good idea to put thousands of people out of work by getting rid of Queensland's pokies or indeed getting rid of the enormously successful Gambling Community Benefit Fund, I do very much believe that we are doing the right thing by capping the total number in hotels.

While I have enormous regard for the member for Moggill, I do believe that the free market philosophy he injected into the gaming machine industry with his gaming white paper in 1995 or 1996 has harmed a lot of people. That white paper sought to diminish the legislative distinction between pubs and clubs and fuelled massive growth in gaming machines in pubs. Machines in pubs are more widely dispersed through the community. They are more aggressively marketed and as a result they tend to turn over more of people's money than those in clubs. They also do not have the positive social purpose of injecting money into the good causes that clubs support.

The growth of machines in pubs was making publicans a lot of money, but it was money that was often coming from people who could not afford it. The growth, had it been allowed to continue, would have become more and more socially destructive. The cap stopped that growth and the legislation we are debating tonight creates a sensible mechanism for the redistribution of machines from pub to pub within geographic boundaries. I commend the bill to the House.