

GAMING MACHINES, BURSWOOD CASINO

213. Hon BARRY HOUSE to the Minister for Racing and Gaming:

I refer to a media statement by the minister dated 28 March 2001 which states -

. . . The real problem is the availability of casino style gaming machines in the community, an issue the new Labor Government is committed to preventing in Western Australia . . .

- (1) Does the minister stand by these comments?
- (2) If so, how does the minister justify the massive increase of 200 gaming machines at the Burswood Casino?
- (3) Why is the increase in gaming machines not covered in the minister's detailed 10-page ministerial statement given in this place yesterday, nor in his media statement?
- (4) Has the minister broken another Labor promise to the people of Western Australia?
- (5) What else is the minister's Government trying to hide from the people of Western Australia about this secret deal?

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The PRESIDENT: The minister would be aware that the last part of the question will be answered outside the standing orders.

Hon NICK GRIFFITHS replied:

- (1) It is unfortunate that only 22 minutes remain for question time. I note that the honourable member has asked five questions and he has at last bothered to read a media statement, one that was released some months ago. He would note the crucial phrase "in the community".

Hon Barry House interjected.

Hon NICK GRIFFITHS: The honourable member asks questions but does not want to hear the answers. That is typical. This Government is not interested in the proliferation of casino-type gambling in the community. We are not going to have a proliferation of gambling machines in pubs and clubs or outside of the Burswood Casino - full stop. That deals with the member's first part of the question. If the Liberals have a contrary point of view, I would be interested to hear it.

Hon Ken Travers interjected.

Hon NICK GRIFFITHS: I know a few of his close associates are nearby.

Hon Peter Foss: Hang on, who brought in the Burswood Casino?

The PRESIDENT: Order, members! The minister will not entertain any supplementary questions or supplementary comments from parliamentary secretaries.

Hon NICK GRIFFITHS: I do not want to be diverted by an unruly interjection, but I understand that Hon Peter Foss is getting closer and closer to Mr Crichton-Browne, Mr Shave and other people like that.

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order, members! The minister is losing the thread of his argument because of unruly interjections.

Hon NICK GRIFFITHS: To continue -

- (2) Hon Barry House asked about the 200 new gaming machines that Burswood Casino wishes to have over time. That is a matter of supply meeting demand. The number of machines in the Burswood Casino has progressively been increased. Currently, it has approximately 1 300 machines. Over time, the Gaming Commission of Western Australia has given approval for the casino to have a number of additional machines. The Gaming Commission considers the request for more machines, and it ticks off on that if it thinks the request is appropriate. It considers matters including harm minimisation, security and proper surveillance. The Government thinks it is appropriate that the Burswood Casino should have the capacity to meet the demand, and it is envisaged that the casino must be supplied with approximately another 200 gaming machines, which would bring the number up to 1 500.
- (3) The member asked me why I made no mention of that issue in either yesterday's media statement that I released or the ministerial statement I gave to the House. I have dealt with the first aspect of that. It is a matter for the Gaming Commission to tick off, as distinct from the Government. I have given the Government's stance on that issue. Secondly, my ministerial statement and media statement dealt with negotiated proposed amendments to the agreement leading to proposed amendments to the Act. The

provisions for the number of gaming machines that the Gaming Commission may or may not agree to in the future are contained in the existing legislative arrangements and therefore are not subject to the proposed amendments that will be brought before the House.

I will refer to the processes that I went through yesterday prior to giving the ministerial statement. I thought it was appropriate that, in so far as matters were to be made public, they should be made through Parliament by way of a ministerial statement.

Hon Barry House: When did you conduct your press conference?

Hon NICK GRIFFITHS: Just one moment. I have used my words carefully and the member can read *Hansard* if he does not understand them. Prior to that, I organised a press conference to take place -

Hon Barry House: Prior to that?

Hon NICK GRIFFITHS: That is right. The press conference was embargoed. My media statement dealt with the same issues as the ministerial statement. Therefore, I dealt with amendments to the agreement of the Act. The embargoed press conference, which took place at approximately 2.50 pm, lasted for a substantial period for a press conference and was attended by a number of television station crews and journalists. I was asked a number of questions about the issues. I was asked questions wider than the matters to do with the negotiated amendments to the agreement and the proposed amendments to the Act. One of those issues related to the number of gaming machines. I answered that question and pointed out that I anticipated that the number of machines would be increased to 1 500 in due course. This was no secret; it was done in front of representatives of the media. I am advised that the issue was canvassed on one television news program last night - I think it was Channel Nine, but I did not see it.

(4)-(5) Hon Barry House asked five questions, but there was a bit of noise during the fourth and fifth questions, both of which were matters of political rhetoric based on ill-founded assumptions. I would hate to say it was typical of the member's ignorance, but the comments were based on ignorance. This process has been engaged in for over 18 months and has been very carefully dealt with so as not to encourage people to engage in speculation in shares of a public company. As far as I or anyone who has any knowledge of this matter is concerned, the process has been carried out properly. There is nothing at all for the member to be concerned about. We have come up with a very good arrangement that will be subject to the appropriate parliamentary scrutiny. That has been evidenced by my ministerial statement, which led to the questioning. The matter will be subject to the appropriate public scrutiny when a Bill is brought before Parliament.

The negotiated alterations to the agreement cannot take place unless Parliament agrees to the proposal. I am satisfied that what has taken place is good. It is a great result for Western Australia. As I said yesterday and have said on a number of occasions, this result is good for jobs, investment and the revenues of the State.