

ADJOURNMENT OF THE HOUSE

HON KIM CHANCE (Agricultural - Leader of the House) [5.10 pm]: I move -

That the house do now adjourn

I do not know whether this motion also means that I am inviting the Barry Haase half-hour to start again!

Burswood Casino Gaming Machines - Adjournment Debate

HON NORMAN MOORE (Mining and Pastoral - Leader of the Opposition) [5.10 pm]: I assure the Leader of the House that this is not part of the Barry Haase half-hour. I want to make some brief comments about matters raised in this house in relation to poker machines. This will become an ongoing saga, because yesterday, a backbench member of the government asked the Minister for Racing and Gaming, Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich, a dorothy dix question that gave her the opportunity to laud the proposed action of the South Sydney Rabbitohs rugby leagues club to get rid of poker machines. I do not know whether that is what that club intends to do, but, if that is its decision, that is a good thing in my view. The minister then went on to try to create the impression that, somehow or other, the opposition supports poker machines. In doing so, the minister completely misrepresented a comment that was made by Hon Barbara Scott, forcing me to take a point of order to make it very clear that the Liberal Party does not support poker machines; it never has, and it never will. Indeed, having been a Minister for Racing and Gaming, I was approached on a number of occasions to allow poker machines, and on every occasion I said that the Liberal Party's policy is that we are not going to allow them. That is still our policy, and that will continue to be our policy.

Hon Kim Chance: Good.

Hon NORMAN MOORE: What the minister does not seem to understand is that Western Australia already has a type of poker machine. Those machines are called video gaming machines, or electronic gaming machines, depending on which terminology we choose to use. Those machines were brought in by the Brian Burke Labor Government - not the Liberal Party - so that Western Australia would get a casino. For the benefit of the minister, those machines are slightly different from reel poker machines, because people who use those machines have to go through more than one process to get an outcome. In other words, people actually have to think, albeit for a fleeting moment, whereas with an ordinary reel machine, all people have to do is press a button and they will get a result. It is still only a matter of time before people get addicted. It just takes longer to get addicted with a video gaming machine than it does with a normal poker machine. As I have said, those machines were brought in by the Burke Labor government so that Western Australia would get a casino. Therefore, for the minister to start talking about how the Labor Party is on the high moral ground on this matter defies logic, because we would not have those machines were it not for the Brian Burke Labor government.

Burswood came to see me, and my predecessor Max Evans, on a number of occasions, and we refused to allow the casino to change its video gaming machines to reel poker machines. The reason Burswood wanted to change from video gaming machines to reel machines is that not many casinos have video gaming machines, so very few of those machines are available. Our casino is probably the only casino in Australia that has those machines. All the innovation that is taking place with poker machines is taking place with reel poker machines. Burswood has always told me that it is disadvantaged vis-a-vis the casinos in other states because it does not have reel machines, but we continued to say no to those machines. That is why I asked the minister today whether she has been approached by Burswood to change the policy. The minister said she has not been approached, and I am pleased to hear that. I hope that if the minister is approached, she will tell Burswood that it is not on. However, let us face the facts. The video gaming machines in the casino in Western Australia are addictive gambling machines, in the same way that reel machines are addictive gambling machines, although they are probably not as bad. The government wants to take the high moral ground by saying it has put all these wonderful policies in place to stop gambling in Western Australia. The minister is also saying how wonderful it is that the Rabbitohs rugby league club is getting rid of some of its poker machines. Well, what I would say to the minister is: if gambling is such a terrible thing, why not tell Burswood to get rid of its video gaming machines? The government cannot have it both ways. It cannot say that it is taking the high moral ground on gambling and that it is wonderful that the New South Wales government is getting rid of some gaming machines in Sydney, when at the same time it is allowing poker machines in Western Australia - which were brought in by a Labor government - to continue to exist, and somehow or other think that there is no inconsistency between the two points of view. The good thing about this issue - the Leader of the House might relay this to the Minister for Racing and Gaming - is that ever since I have been a member there has generally been bipartisan support for a no-poker machine policy in Western Australia, and long may that be the case. We should not get rid of video gaming machines at the casino because we already have them and if we got rid of them, it would significantly diminish the viability of Burswood Casino. Now that we have them, we cannot get rid of them. For the minister to try to score some silly political point in here over this gaming issue yesterday is worthy of a couple of comments today. I want her to understand that this is a bipartisan matter, and it should remain that way. If

either the Labor or Liberal Party decides to go down a different path, we will have a political debate about it. However, for the time being, it is not an issue and the minister should not try to make it an issue.

Statewide Student Parliament - Adjournment Debate

HON MATT BENSON-LIDHOLM (South West) [5.16 pm]: I would like to report to members on this year's Statewide Student Parliament that was held in this Parliament between Sunday, 26 August and Tuesday, 28 August. Some 91 year 9 and 10 students spent three days at Parliament House. The students represented all the Legislative Assembly electorates across Western Australia and the six Legislative Council regions. I refer specifically to the students from my electorate in the South West Region who attended the Parliament. I will name each of them. I acknowledge Georgia Mather-McCaw from Manjimup Senior High School, Melissa Hogan from Busselton Senior High School, Ashleah Grant from Donnybrook District High School, Anne Hickey from Margaret River Senior High School, Gabby Loynd from Mt Barker Senior High School, Benjamin Starling from St Joseph's College in Albany and Alice Henderson from Frederick Irwin Anglican School. The students who represented the 11 electorates in the South West District were Caitlin Frunks from Albany Senior High School, Nathan Barrie from Newton Moore Senior High School, Caitlin Dunnet from Bunbury Cathedral Grammar School, Amy Celisano from Harvey Senior High School, Chelsea Tully from Halls Head Community College, Ian Marley from Australind Senior High School, Chay Booker from Coodanup Community College, Tegan Ambrosa from Pinjarra Senior High School, William Pritchard from Great Southern Grammar School, Jordan Holt from Cornerstone Christian College and Scarlett Kuser-Singe from Bridgetown Senior High School.

The student Parliament was opened by His Excellency the Governor, Dr Ken Michael, AC, who spoke to the students at length about the significance of the student Parliament. I take on board the comments he made, which were excellent and very much pertinent to the time that the students were here. The students came from as far north as Halls Creek and Derby, from as far east as Mt Magnet and from as far south as Albany. During their time in Parliament, the student parliamentarians debated, of all things, The Establishment of a People's Forum on Daylight Saving Bill 2007. The bill passed through all stages in Legislative Assembly. Following the debate on the bill in the Legislative Assembly, the Legislative Council members voted -

Hon Barry House: Did they get a better resolution than this Parliament?

Hon MATT BENSON-LIDHOLM: They voted 25-6 to have the bill deferred and referred to a committee to report back to Parliament.

Hon Norman Moore: And on a show of hands they were overwhelmingly opposed to daylight saving, which I hope the government will take on board.

Hon MATT BENSON-LIDHOLM: We will wait on that. My role, and the role of Hon Robyn McSweeney, in hosting the proceedings to a certain extent, was to present to the students an outline of a typical day in the life of an MLC, if there is such a thing. We both performed that duty with the students present. I believe that the students benefited greatly through the process of debating. They appreciated the opportunity to be here. They met new friends and, importantly, they talked about the democratic process, which is something that school kids do not get to see that frequently, especially those who live in the south west or other parts of Western Australia. However, it is the sort of thing that MPs do every day in the house. The students themselves were very enthusiastic and focused. I congratulate them on their participation and wish them well in their future studies and careers. I would especially like to thank Professors Harry Phillips and David Black, both parliamentary fellows here, for their contribution. I would personally like to thank Jane Gray, the parliamentary education officer, for the opportunity to talk to the students. As a former educator in this area, I derived great pleasure from talking to the kids, not only in the chamber but also afterwards. I think it augurs well for the future that these sorts of programs are presented to the youth of our state.

Burswood Casino Gaming Machines - Adjournment Debate

HON KIM CHANCE (Agricultural - Leader of the House) [5.21 pm]: I promise I will not keep anyone longer than I need to. I agree with the comments made by the Leader of the Opposition. I know this probably makes people absolutely sick because it is twice in one day that I have done this. I promise that I will make up for it next week. I also want to defend my friend and colleague the Minister for Racing and Gaming. The broad thrust of what the Leader of the Opposition was saying was that for years now, since the establishment of the Burswood Casino, there has been a bipartisan resistance to those electronic machines that we call pokies as opposed to those electronic machines that we call electronic gaming machines. The difference between the two is quite simple. I can tell members what the difference is because, amongst my many vices, I am also a gambler. I am quite a happy gambler.

Hon Norman Moore: That's where we're different.

Hon KIM CHANCE: Yes. An EGM does involve skill, as the Leader of the Opposition pointed out.

Hon Ray Halligan: I don't call it skill.

Hon KIM CHANCE: It involves a decision-making process. The consequence of the involvement of the decision-making process actually makes the rate of play much slower.

Hon Ray Halligan: Even with the old poker machines and the mechanical reels, there were models where you had to press a button and you could stop a reel.

Hon KIM CHANCE: Yes, a long, long time ago.

Hon Ray Halligan: I go back that far. I grew up with poker machines in New South Wales.

Hon KIM CHANCE: That is when we could actually hear the wheels turning. The issue is really about the rate of play. The rate of play is so fast that for an addict, the degree to which they can get through money is just stunning.

Hon Ray Halligan: Might I suggest that's because of multiple coins now, not so much the speed of the machine, although they probably have speeded them up. With the old poker machines, it was one coin, one pull. With these current machines, you can put multiple coins in and higher denominations.

Hon KIM CHANCE: It is worse; they take notes now. Jupiters casino in Townsville, the only casino I have been to in Queensland - I think it is a state law - now restricts the denomination of the note to \$20. I am not aware of a limit in New South Wales. There may be one; I am just not aware of one. If \$100 notes can be fed into a machine, imagine what could happen to a pension cheque in a matter of minutes. That is the significant difference between an EGM and a pokie. I concede that there is not a great deal of logic in comparing the difference between the two machines.

Hon Norman Moore: It just takes you longer to go broke.

Hon KIM CHANCE: Yes, but I do not think the difference between the two machines is why we do not have such a problem in Western Australia. The minister's figures show that we have about half the problem or less. Incidentally, while we are talking about statistics, I heard something really frightening on the radio last night. I cannot attest to its truth, but a caller on ABC radio indicated that 27 per cent of the world's pokies are in the state of New South Wales. I do not know whether that is right, but if it is, it is really scary.

Hon Helen Morton: They've got the pokies and Victoria's got the brothels. What are we going to have?

Hon KIM CHANCE: I am going to leave that to another debate; that is too tempting! I was getting to the point of why I do not think the problem here is as serious as it is in other places. I believe it is due to the fact that successive state governments in Western Australia have confined gambling to Burswood Casino. New South Wales has had legal and illegal gambling for years. Everyone knows that, walking around Sydney in the 1950s and 1960s, people could easily find casinos. South Australia resisted the introduction of gaming as Western Australia had, but when the casino opened in the redeveloped old central railway station in Adelaide, there was a virtually simultaneous spread of the machines to every hotel that wanted them. Adelaide went from being one of the most restricted cities in Australia for gambling to being the least restricted. Pokies are almost in shopping malls. What happened there is unbelievable.

Hon Norman Moore: Our hotels wanted the same deal here, and we resisted it.

Hon KIM CHANCE: Indeed, the Court government did, and I applaud the way in which it resisted. That is why I said that this is a bipartisan thing, and we should not be throwing barbs at each other across the chamber. This is where I come to the defence of my colleague. I think she answered an interjection from the other side with a rhetorical question, and the matter went from there.

Hon Norman Moore: I think you should read *Hansard* about what she said, otherwise I would not have got up. You read what she said.

Hon KIM CHANCE: Yes, but I am just trying to calm the situation a bit and acknowledge that this is a bipartisan situation that we should guard jealously, because we have understood that it works. I also want to try to make the point that I do not think there is a difference between pokies and electronic gaming machines. There is a difference, but it is pretty marginal, and the Leader of the Opposition started to move in that direction. The issue of gambling problems is availability. People can use machines in Western Australia, but they have to make the choice to get dressed up, get into their cars and go over to the other side of the bridge, and make a conscious effort. That does not deter everyone, but it will deter some. When it is simply a matter of going down to the local pub, having few more drinks than we should - which also affects judgement - it is more likely to engender excess gambling than the conscious decision one has to make to go to the casino. I am certainly not a wowser, as I indicated. I enjoy a flutter as much as the next Australian. I think we have struck it about right here. I do not want to live in a city that does not have any gambling at all. I have done that, and it is pretty boring.

Hon Barbara Scott: Was that Merredin?

Hon KIM CHANCE: Yes, but we have the TAB in Merredin, so there is some gambling. It is a matter of striking a balance, and I think the balance that we are able to strike is measurable. The Minister for Racing and Gaming gave the sum of those objective measures. It is worth working for.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 5.28 pm
