

Your petitioners therefore humbly pray that you will give this matter earnest consideration and your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

[See petition No 160.]

TRANSPORT ASSISTANCE FOR EARLY INTERVENTION CENTRE

Petition

Mr McGowan presented the following petition bearing the signatures of 57 persons -

To the Honourable the Speaker and members of the Legislative Assembly of the Parliament of Western Australia in Parliament assembled.

We the undersigned, wish to express our concern at the possibility that the transport assistance currently provided to children attending the Early Intervention Centre in Mosman Park may be removed following the completion of the review currently being conducted by the Dept of Transport. We urge the members to prevent this from happening as it will lead to undue financial hardship for a number of families and may lead to some children being prevented from receiving the help that they require in their educational development.

Your petitioners therefore humbly pray that you will give this matter earnest consideration and your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

[See petition No 161.]

BETTING CONTROL AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

MR COWAN (Merredin -Deputy Premier) [10.13 am]: I move -

That the Bill be now read a second time.

This Bill makes a number of changes to the way sports betting can be conducted by licensed bookmakers. Currently, the Minister must approve organisations wishing to have bookmakers attend professional footrace meetings and the venues at which the betting is to occur. These approvals are valid for 12 months.

This system has presented some administrative difficulties. Often organisations lodge their requests for approval for bookmakers to field at footracing events leaving very little time to obtain ministerial approval. The current provisions also mean that bookmakers may field at subsequent footracing events at approved venues within the 12 month approval period, without the requirement for the organisations to advise either the Betting Control Board or the Minister of these events. This creates difficulties controlling individual events.

To overcome this, the Bill provides for permits to be issued for individual events, and locations for sporting events will be registered by the Betting Control Board. The Betting Control Board has had a number of requests for the provisions regarding bookmakers' betting on professional footracing to be extended to professional cycling and wheelchair events.

In considering these requests, and, in the context of the development of sports betting by bookmakers in other States, particularly in the Northern Territory, the Bill will broaden the provisions of section 4A to allow bookmakers to attend and take bets on designated sporting events such as Australian Football League football matches and test or one day cricket matches. Designated sporting events will be determined by the Betting Control Board and will be published in the *Government Gazette*.

The Betting Control Act stipulates that a prescribed amount, currently 50 per cent, of the betting turnover levy payable by sports bookmakers operating at horse or greyhound racecourses is paid into the consolidated fund.

The Bill will allow the Betting Control Board to collect this portion of the levy for distribution to sporting or other organisations as directed by the Minister for Sport and Recreation. Similarly, a prescribed portion of the levy from betting conducted at a designated sporting event will be payable to the board for distribution in the same manner. Initially, the prescribed portion will be 100 per cent. The current provisions of the Act require bookmakers to deliver a betting ticket to all bettors, other than telephone bettors. However, bookmakers are permitted to operate credit betting and it is traditional that most credit bettors decline to take the tickets issued to them by bookmakers at the time the bet is lodged. The reluctance of credit bettors to take their tickets means bookmakers, through no fault of their own, are not complying with the provisions of the Act.

The Bill amends section 31 of the Act to require bookmakers to issue a ticket for each bet and to deliver the ticket to the bettor unless the regulations prescribe otherwise. This will allow the requirements for the issuing of betting tickets to be varied to suit telephone and other credit betting practices. The current activities of full-time sports bookmakers operating from a racecourse have highlighted the demand from bettors for opportunities to bet on new sporting events and betting contingencies. Ministerial approval is presently required before new sporting events and betting contingencies can be offered to punters.

To facilitate approvals, the Bill will amend section 4B of the Act to transfer the responsibility for approving events and contingencies for sports betting from the Minister to the Betting Control Board. Under delegated powers, in appropriate circumstance, the chairperson of the board will be able to issue approvals with minimum delay.

The Betting Control Act stipulates that a bookmaker shall employ only persons who hold a bookmaker's employee licence. This requirement has caused difficulty for bookmakers, particularly at country race meetings, when staff call in sick at short notice. Bookmakers in the metropolitan area normally have access to a pool of licensed bookmakers' employees. However, this is often not the case in remote areas.

The Bill will amend the Act to allow the steward in control of a race meeting to issue temporary bookmakers' employees' licences on the day of a race meeting. The criteria to be used by the steward to assess applications for temporary licences will be set by the Betting Control Board.

While calling of the card events may be conducted at prescribed venues under the Betting Control Act, the board is aware that many calling of the card events are conducted at country venues without the approval of the board. The board believes the existing provisions in the Act are unnecessarily onerous and time consuming and do not encourage organisations to seek board approval for such events. The Bill will amend the Act to allow the board to authorise and control the settlement of bets and betting on calling of the card events. Approvals will be published in the *Government Gazette*. In addition, the Bill contains a provision requiring bookmakers fielding at calling of the card events to lodge returns and pay a betting levy to the race club conducting the event on which the betting occurred. This levy is currently paid into the consolidated fund.

The probity arrangements covering licensed persons at the Burswood International Resort Casino permit the Gaming Commission to conduct periodic police checks on licensed persons for audit purposes.

The Bill introduces a similar provision under the Betting Control Act so that periodic police checks can be conducted on bookmakers and bookmakers' employees. The States and Territories have, at a meeting of the Racing Ministers' Conference, been asked to enact legislation to recognise prior interstate betting offences.

The Bill contains amendments to enact this request. The Bill also contains some technical amendments which allow the board to delegate its duties as well as its powers; allow any offence committed under either the Betting Control Act or the Totalisator Agency Board Betting Act 1960 to be prosecuted by the board; delete redundant references to the Commissioner of State Taxation; and extend the provision allowing the seizure of evidence to an officer authorised by the board.

Section 36 of the Act requires that a review of the Act be conducted as soon as practicable after 1 January 1991 and every fifth anniversary after that date. As a result of the major amendments to the Betting Control Act that came into operation in June 1996, it was decided that the review that was due as soon as practicable after 1 January 1996, would be conducted in conjunction with the review of the Act required under the Competition Principles Agreement.

The Bill sets the next review five years after the date of proclamation of the Betting Control Amendment Bill. I commend the Bill to the House.

I table an explanatory memorandum.

[See paper No 1260.]

Debate adjourned, on motion by Ms Warnock.

CRIMINAL CODE AMENDMENT BILL

As to Committee

MR PENDAL (South Perth) [10.24 am]: I move -

That the Committee of the Whole House, when considering the Criminal Code Amendment Bill, has the power to consider any amendments to the Health Act in relation to abortion.

The motion has been circulated for some time and is a perfectly normal, ordinary, legitimate and longstanding