

**STATUTES AMENDMENT (PROHIBITION ON MINORS PARTICIPATING
IN LOTTERIES) BILL**
21 February 2007

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from 27 September. Page 772.)

The Hon. D.G.E. HOOD: This bill makes a fairly simple legislative change but, indeed, a significant one, and it is a change that I support. Scratchie tickets appear to be the honourable member's target in this bill, and perhaps it will be the case at the committee stage that we will be able to more clearly define the relevant targets. However, at the very least, scratchies are a concern to Family First, in particular the marketing of scratchies to children using brands such as Star Wars, as is the case in one particular instance. It might appeal to them, but it certainly does not appeal to me in any way.

The Hon. Andrew Evans and I represent South Australian families to the best of our ability, and our constituent parents, we believe, are concerned about the real possibility of their children having the legal right, even without their knowledge, to purchase scratchie tickets and, indeed, participate in any lottery. Of course, the difficulty there is that that may be the beginning of what could be a very long-term gambling problem. For that reason we support the bill because we believe it seeks to stop the problem before it begins, in one sense. A child remains responsible to their parents until the age of majority—that is, 18 years of age—and I believe that families are entitled to ensure that their children are not being enticed into gambling at an early age through lotteries, especially those aimed or specifically marketed at children, as has been the case with scratchies in specific instances.

If the government is serious about problem gambling, it ought to eliminate the possibility that children start gambling before they reach the age of majority. I am on the public record concerning the need for our education system to teach what I have termed 'life skills' to our children. One of the skills that I have

specifically mentioned concerns debt and the increasing level of debt that is faced by our youth. Indeed, there have been sufficient newspaper reports in the last two years to demonstrate that our young people are somewhat clueless—if I can use that term—regarding what their buying habits are truly costing. I think that we have seen that specifically with mobile phone debt in recent media reports.

The parliament has decreed for quite some time that the age at which children are responsible to make decisions for themselves is 18 years of age. I sometimes wonder if that is high enough, certainly in terms of the drinking age, for example. However, we contradict that approach by letting these people gamble in lotteries. So, either the age is 18 or it is not, I guess is what I am saying.

I would also like to raise the issue of problem gambling restraining orders, the relevance of which I will come to. The Independent Gaming Authority annual report of 2004-05 indicated that, in the first 12 months of implementation of the problem gambling family protection orders regime, just 58 inquiries were received and only four referred to pre-hearing meetings and resulted in consent orders. Thus, with this regimen to enable families to protect themselves from the problem gambling of a family member, only four orders were taken up in the most recently reported year—only four orders in the whole year.

Clearly, something is not working. This suggests to me that the government has engaged the parliament in a project that is not working, as I say. I am concerned the project may have reflected a level of tokenism, more than genuine need, at the expense of real solutions on problem gambling.

A review conducted by the University of Adelaide in 2003, entitled, 'A decade of gambling research in Australia and New Zealand (1992-2002): Implications for policy, regulation and harm minimisation', indicated that the prevalence of problem gambling was between 1.24 and 2 per cent of South Australian survey respondents—up to 2 per cent: 1 in 50 people. Taking a conservative analysis of the lower figure, compared against the Department for Environment and

Heritage figure that during that period there were roughly (and conservatively) 1.1 million adult residents in South Australia, indicates that there were approximately 13 640 problem gamblers in South Australia. Again, these are the most conservative possible figures.

The Hon. Nick Xenophon interjecting:

The Hon. D.G.E. HOOD: Indeed; very conservative, the Hon. Mr Xenophon interjects, and I agree with that. Yet for the families of those problem gamblers only four obtained problem gambling family protection orders; only four of 13 640, and they are the most possibly conservative figures. It is only when you look at that statistical comparison you can see why I am concerned about this response to problem gambling.

Returning to the issue at hand: I am certainly pleased to support the Hon. Mr Xenophon's bill in this case and we see it as an important step in discouraging the onset of problem gambling at an earlier stage. I will make perhaps just one final point, and that is the extra relevance of the same University of Adelaide report to which I have referred. It indicated that the research is beginning to show that underage gambling has not received sufficient attention in the past and, for instance, indicated that the Productivity Commission in 1999 found that 35 per cent of male problem gamblers reported starting to gamble regularly between the ages of 11 and 17. Hence the importance of this bill; it stops many people before the problem develops. So, therefore this council will be doing something to support the government in fighting problem gambling in our youth and, in my view, underlining the inherent value that this council offers in providing quality legislation.

I raise an issue that was touched on by the Hon. Mr Lucas. I consider that there may be some merit in excluding fundraising raffles and the like from this bill, and I understand this will be debated. Scratchies and other forms of lotteries available at, say, newsagents are available at any time during trading hours, every business day of the year. By comparison, fundraising raffles, for example, are usually for a finite period, not always available at the same location and

more likely need to be sought out to be participated in. In some instances the windfall to be gained is far less than on Lotteries Commission lotteries, and indeed that is often the case. In most instances they are not supported by the advertising that accompanies Lotteries Commission lotteries. Usually volunteers run these raffles, and I am not in favour of discouraging volunteering on any level and imposing red tape upon them.

So, just in brief summary, we believe there is some scope for allowing participation in lotteries and I understand the bill that Mr Xenophon has put forward allows that up to a maximum value of \$2 000. So, largely, that addresses our concerns. We would not like to see that go any lower. As I said, we certainly support the main thrust of this bill, which is to prevent problem gambling at an early age before it becomes a problem at all.