



# LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

SESSION OF 2019 - 2020

(SECOND SESSION OF THE FORTY-NINTH PARLIAMENT)

## VOTES AND PROCEEDINGS

No. 59

THURSDAY, 4 JUNE 2020

- 1 **COUNCIL MEETS.**— The Council met at 11.00 o'clock in the forenoon.
- 2 **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF TRADITIONAL PEOPLE.**— The President said: “We meet today on Tasmanian Aboriginal land. We acknowledge and pay respect to the Tasmanian Aboriginal people and elders, past, present and emerging. We recognise them as the traditional and original owners and the continuing custodians of this land.”
- 3 **PRAYERS.**— The President read Prayers.
- 4 **COVID-19 IMPACTS ON GAMBLING ACTIVITY AND SUPPORTS TO GAMBLERS.**— Ms *Webb* asked the Honourable the Leader of the Government — Given that face-to-face gambling venues are closed during the COVID-19 shutdown, and many habitual gamblers and those who have a problem with gambling will be experiencing an enforced pause to their face-to-face gambling activity:
  - (1) What increased and/or additional risks have been identified by the Government during the COVID-19 crisis in relation to:
    - (a) levels of gambling activity;
    - (b) levels of gambling harm;
    - (c) impact on those who are in an at-risk gambling category; and
    - (d) impact on the families of those in at-risk gambling categories?
  - (2) What initiatives have been developed under the Government’s gambling support program to specifically address the changed circumstances and potential increased risks during the COVID-19 crisis?
  - (3) Has additional funding been provided specifically to gambling support services for proactive outreach during the COVID-19 crisis?
  - (4) Has additional funding been invested during the COVID-19 crisis in the Government’s public health education campaigns relating to gambling?
  - (5) Has there been an increase during the COVID-19 crisis in the frequency of media and online advertisements promoting the public health messaging on gambling and promoting gambling support services?
  - (6) How are the Government’s gambling-related web-based sites, e.g. the Know Your Odds website and Facebook page and the Communities Tasmania gambling webpage, being used to provide the Tasmanian public with information, advice or messages specifically relating to the COVID-19 crisis and gambling harm and gambling services?

The Leader answered,

- (1) The Government does not have possession of any research into additional levels of risk during the relatively brief period of time that has elapsed during which gambling venues have been closed to patrons.
- (2) The Gambling Support Program (GSP) is working closely with Gamblers Help specialist support providers to monitor changes in demand volume and client needs as well as collecting anecdotal information about clients' experiences through COVID 19. Gamblers Help Services support providers are providing alternative accessible support during this COVID-19 crisis. Advice regarding gambling and COVID-19 is available through Gambling Help Online and the Tasmanian Government Coronavirus site. In addition, the GSP is developing COVID-19 messaging for distribution through the GSP website, Know Your Odds website and the Know Your Odds Facebook page. Finally, The GSP is monitoring emerging academic and economic studies focussed on the effects of COVID-19 on gambling, including potential shifts to online gambling.
- (3) No. Support providers have reported a decrease in the number of people accessing gambling specialist support services and are redirecting existing capacity including undertaking proactive support to existing and recent clients and their families as appropriate.
- (4) No, although the development of a planned online gambling campaign has been brought forward.
- (5) No.
- (6) Messaging regarding COVID-19 and gambling is being provided through Gambling Help Online and the Tasmanian Government Coronavirus site. Additional messaging reflecting this advice is in development and will be delivered through the GSP website, Know Your Odds website, the Know Your Odds Facebook page.

**5 COVID-19 RESTRICTIONS AND INCREASE OF ONLINE GAMBLING ACTIVITY.**— Ms Webb asked the Honourable the Leader of the Government —Noting that there is concern expressed about an increase in online gambling during the time face-to-face gambling venues are closed, with many gambling-related activities such as racing having also ceased, and with people spending more time in isolation at home:

- (1) How does the Government measure the level of use and quantum of losses to online gambling in this state?
- (2)
  - (a) Is there an accurate and credible measurement of the levels of use and quantum of losses to online gambling prior to the COVID-19 crisis in Tasmania; and
  - (b) if so, what are the pre-COVID-19 Tasmanian figures on use and losses to online gambling?
- (3) How is the Government monitoring or measuring the levels of use and quantum of losses to online gambling during the COVID-19 crisis in Tasmania?
- (4) Is the Government aware of an increase in the use of and losses to online gambling during the COVID-19 crisis?
- (5)
  - (a) Is the Government monitoring or measuring changes in the amount of advertising for online gambling in Tasmania during the COVID-19 crisis?
  - (b)
    - (i) If so, has there been an increase in advertising; and
    - (ii) what is the data on that increase?

The Leader answered,

In response to Questions (1), (2) and (3), It is difficult to obtain data on the level of online gambling by persons based in Tasmania. This is due to the different forms of online gambling, the cross-border nature of the service, that some people are gambling on illegal overseas sites, and the limited availability of industry data.

While some data from online gambling taxed in Tasmania is available, information on the volume of spend by Tasmanians on other products offered online such as keno and lotteries is difficult to obtain. The introduction of the point of consumption (POC) tax in Tasmania from 1 January 2020 provides an indication of Tasmanian betting levels. The tax applies to all wagering and betting types or products offered to customers in Tasmania. This includes bets placed online or through a physical TAB terminal located in Tasmania.

There are limitations in using this data to assess trends in online gambling pre and during COVID-19. These include the lack of historical trend data and that the tax collected is not separately reported for online and terrestrial gambling. However, based on both sources, POC tax revenue year-to-date to 30 April 2020 is tracking to budget, with no noticeable spikes relating to increased activity.

Research is currently underway by the University of Sydney to determine how COVID-19 has affected gambling participation in Australia.

In response to Question (4), it has been reported by credit bureaus and some major banks that consumer spending on gambling has increased during the period of COVID-19 restrictions. Changes to consumer spending habits are to be expected due to the restrictions imposed. Spending on online gambling has fluctuated over this period, however it is too early to draw any meaningful conclusions from the limited data available.

In response to Question (5), when a complaint is received about gambling advertising (including online advertising) of the sole Tasmanian licensed provider, an investigation is undertaken by the Liquor and Gaming Branch of the Department of Treasury and Finance. As at 26 May 2020, no complaints have been received since the shut-down of gambling venues from 23 March 2020.

**6 PAPERS.**— The Deputy Clerk of the Council laid upon the Table the following Papers:—

- (1) Theatre Royal Management Board – Annual Report 2019
- (2) Notice under Section 19 of the COVID-19 Disease Emergency (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2020

**7 PREMIER'S ADDRESS.**— The Order of the Day was read for resuming the Debate on the Question, That the Premier's Address be noted.

The Question was again proposed and the Council resumed the debate.

**8 SITTING SUSPENDED.**— It being 1.00 o'clock p.m. the Sitting of the Council was suspended.

The Council resumed the Sitting at 2.30 o'clock p.m.

**9 QUESTION TIME.**— The President called for Questions without Notice. There were 7 Questions asked.

**10 MOTION WITHOUT NOTICE.**— *Ordered*, That Mrs *Hiscutt* have leave to move a Motion without Notice.

**11 SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER: QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE.**— *Ordered*, That so much of Standing Order No. 49 be suspended for this day's sitting to allow a further period of 30 minutes for Questions without Notice. (Mrs *Hiscutt*)

**12 QUESTION TIME.**— The President called for Questions without Notice. There were a further 8 Questions asked.

**13 ESTABLISHMENT OF JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE ON TASMANIA'S COVID-19 RESPONSE AND RECOVERY MEASURES.**— A Message from the House of Assembly:—

MR PRESIDENT,

The House of Assembly has disagreed to the following Resolution, communicated to it by the Legislative Council on 3 June 2020 —

*Resolved*, That Noting the significant impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the lives of Tasmanians and given the emergency response by the Tasmanian Government including Coronavirus related expenditure, legislative and public policy developments, that a Joint Select Committee be appointed with power to send for persons and papers, with leave to sit during any adjournment of either House, with leave to adjourn from place to place and with leave to report from time to time to inquire into and report upon—

- (1) (a) The State's immediate and ongoing COVID-19 response and recovery measures;
- (b) the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the health, economic and social lives of Tasmanians; and
- (c) any other matter incidental thereto; and
- (2) That the number of Members to serve on the said Committee on the part of the Legislative Council be four."

*House of Assembly, 4 June 2020*

S. HICKEY, *Speaker*

**14 ADJOURNMENT.**— *Ordered*, .That the Council will at its rising adjourn until 11.00 o'clock am on Wednesday, 24 June 2020.

A Motion was made (Mrs *Hiscutt*) and the Question was proposed, that the Council do now adjourn.

A Debate arose thereupon.

And the Question being put;

It was resolved in the Affirmative.

The Council adjourned at 3.46 o'clock p.m.

D.T. PEARCE, *Clerk of the Council*.