

We The People

Program 137

Life's a Gamble



The whole of mankind has reached a turning point in history. A turning point where we choose healthy life and liberty or a world driven by money, greed and power. Now speaking of MG and P let's take a look at the so called Broadwater Marine project. The Mayor tells us we must have a cruise liner terminal apparently on precious public land and another Casino to pay for all the dredging and marine maintenance. It also appears the people have no real say in the matter while we go through sham reviews and biased meaningless so called public consultation and no doubt an environmental impact statement which will prove conclusively that sea horses, fish, turtles and dugongs love being sucked through dredging pumps. I may sound a little cynical but in my view there is little evidence to date that the Mayor really cares about the environment or that the Councillors will vote for a sustainable development. I suspect it won't matter what the public want, we will get this gaudy Vegas development because of money and power.

The Mayor Tom Tate said that the new Gold Coast Casino license being allotted for the Broadwater project on Wave Break Island will mean the rate payers won't have to foot the bill for dredging and maintenance of the Broadwater or the Seaway. This is where he loses me completely and so for a sea change let's look at the human currents that ebb and flow from this. What the Mayor is apparently proposing is to use gambling money to pay for the marine maintenance of this flashy development and there is an enormous cost to the ratepayers and citizens on the Gold Coast. Let me explain.

First to establish where we sit in international gambling terms, let's have a look at the top ten nations in the world in terms of annual individual gambling losses. Coming in at number 10 is Spain then followed in descending order by Greece, Norway, Hong Kong, Italy, Finland and Canada. In 3rd place for gambling losses is Ireland and in second place Singapore while in first place for the greatest losses per head is, drum roll.....Australia. Yep that's right, Australians on average lose \$1288 dollars per person per year which makes us the envy of the world apparently. So as if that's a number to be proud of lets have another casino license to make our prime position really unassailable. Mayor Tate says the State Government's casino announcement "means that a cruise ship terminal will be delivered here without burden on the ratepayers". Remember the rate payers are we the people and surely we the people should be asked our opinion on mass and be told the full story.

The Productivity Commissions final report into gambling in 2010 highlights the following. The risk for people who only play lotteries and scratchies is low but rises steeply with the frequency of gambling on table games, wagering and especially gaming machines. Six hundred thousand Australians play the pokies at least once a week and 95,000 players are problem gamblers who contribute 40 per cent of the money put into poker machines. The total recorded gambling losses in Australia is now over \$20 billion each year. The rough count of people directly affected ignores the 'ripple effects' of problem gambling. For each gambler, several others are affected — including family members, friends, employers and colleagues. The harm from problem gambling can include suicide, depression, relationship breakdown, lowered work productivity, job loss, bankruptcy and crime. The social cost in dollars alone is at least \$4.7 billion a year and here is the sting in the tail because the Productivity Commission report states the net benefits could be much larger if governments reduced costs through effective prevention and harm minimisation policies. Another casino licence takes us the other way.

Indeed there is a significant conflict of interest for government and therefore Council in that they are the recipient of the windfall and are also charged with its management and the effects on we the people, being society in general. When Council gambles on a project to pay for the upkeep of the waterway it locks in wagering and in doing so embeds an enormous cost to the community. It is sheer folly to suggest the proposed development will not have a cost to the rate payer and their families. The cost will be Titanic and the indirect costs buried in half truths and broken lives let alone the environment. In the end the losses to us will be great, as the Council and State government gamble with our lives and needs. Indeed there is a word for it which is **ludomania** from the Latin meaning frenzied playing. I will let the good book have the final say though.....the love of money is the root of all evil.

Until next time this is Kent Bayley