

Bill, by leave, introduced, and read a first time and ordered to be printed on motion by the Hon. Michael Gallacher.

The Hon. Amanda Fazio: Point of order: Copies of the bill are not available for members in the House.

The PRESIDENT: Order! There is no requirement under the standing orders for the bill to be circulated unless the Minister is proposing to declare the bill an urgent bill. Is the Minister proposing to do that?

The Hon. MICHAEL GALLACHER: No.

The PRESIDENT: I am sure the Clerks will make available the tabled copy of the bill if the member wishes to see it. In accordance with the standing orders debate on the bill will be adjourned at the end of the Minister's second reading speech.

The Hon. Amanda Fazio: No, Mr President. I would like copies of the bill made available now so that members in the Chamber know what is in the bill.

The PRESIDENT: There is no requirement to circulate the bill at this stage of the debate.

The Hon. Amanda Fazio: I appreciate that, Mr President, but you noted that tabling copies could be made available.

The PRESIDENT: The tabling copies are being made available.

Second Reading

The Hon. MICHAEL GALLACHER (Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Minister for the Hunter, and Vice-President of the Executive Council) [3.20 p.m.]: I move:
That this bill be now read a second time.

The bill before the House amends the Sporting Venues Authorities Act 2008 and repeals the Parramatta Stadium Trust Act 1988. A new authority, Venues NSW, will be established and will consolidate the responsibilities and operations of the Illawarra Venues Authority, Parramatta Stadium Trust and the Hunter Region Sporting Venues Authority into one authority managed through one governing board. The implementation of Venues NSW will increase the alignment and integration of the venues with the strategic priorities and objectives of government by providing an opportunity to boost regional tourism, events, access and participation.

The current government-owned venues which will be managed by Venues NSW include Parramatta Stadium, WIN Stadium and WIN Entertainment Centre in Wollongong, Ausgrid Stadium, Newcastle Entertainment Centre and Showground and a number of other venues managed by the Hunter Region Sporting Venues Authority. The Government invests in providing sporting and entertainment venues to the community for a range of social and economic reasons.

A key objective of the bill is to maintain a high level of regional engagement to ensure local communities continue to have a say in how their venues are managed. The bill proposes that Local Venues Councils be established to provide advice on the needs of the Illawarra, Western Sydney and Hunter regions to the Board of Venues NSW. The Local Venues Councils will focus on the needs of their region and help with consultations with stakeholders to ensure venue operations meet regional needs. They will work with Venues NSW to provide feedback to the community about regional plans and initiatives and provide advice and input into the development of plans relating to venues, such as venue master plans.

I have to say, particularly in regard to the Hunter and the Ausgrid Stadium, that the previous Government's handling of Ausgrid was absolutely disgraceful. Not only did that Government disenfranchise the two major tenants of the stadium; it also disenfranchised the electorate and all of the people who had worked for many, many years.

The Hon. Lynda Voltz: What do you think you can do by putting them all into one great big authority?

The Hon. MICHAEL GALLACHER: The former Labor Government played a political game with the stadiums, such as Ausgrid, and brought all its mates on board. It made an absolute mess of Ausgrid. It tried to embarrass Newcastle Knights through the media by looking at the financial status of the Knights. The former Government's handling of situations in Newcastle was an absolute disgrace. This Government is levelling the playing field by ensuring transparency and appropriate processes in the management of these venues, and will do so with local participation—not by working under the old mates Act, as those opposite did when they were in government. Minister Jodie McKay personally vilified the Newcastle Knights team and denigrated the name of Steve Burraston. This is a debate that had been raging in the Hunter for a number of years. Back in 2009 the way in which the Ausgrid development was handled, and the way in which the volunteers who had worked for many, many years to ensure that stadium was a world-class facility were treated was a disgrace. The Labor Government personalised the issue. When Labor was in government it set about personal vilification of all of those in the Hunter who had dared to say no.

The PRESIDENT: Order! There is far too much audible conversation in the Chamber.

The Hon. MICHAEL GALLACHER: All of those who dared to say no to the former Minister for the Hunter found themselves written out of the history pages of these regional facilities. This Government will ensure proper management processes are in place to maximise the potential of these facilities—unlike the previous Government, which set about maximising the potential for its mates. Of course, that is now history. These stadiums can now look forward to a better, richer future for themselves and the local communities. The local venues councils proposed by this bill will also provide advice on strategies to meet government priorities linked to increasing regional events and tourism, sport and recreation development and community participation.

The bill proposes that the new Venues NSW board will be made up of up to 11 members and include the chairs of the Local Venues Councils and an employee from the Office of Communities. The yet to be appointed head of Venues NSW will oversee the operations and activities of the venues, including driving policy collaboration and coordination across each area of the business. Responsibilities of the head of Venues NSW will include financial and asset management and delivery of outcomes and priorities for the venues, within the strategic parameters determined by the Minister. From a commercial perspective, consolidating current structures provides an opportunity for cost savings from shared procurement, consolidated

service delivery contracts and staff being shared in areas such as finance and asset management. No additional resources are required as the new management structure can be funded from existing resources.

There is a strong case to support making these changes. A 2010 independent review by KPMG for the Department of Premier and Cabinet concerning governance and structure arrangements recommended that regional sporting venue responsibilities and operations should be combined. The 2010 review was independent of the previous Government, and when the report on the review came into that Government's hands it ignored the report. This Government recognises the need for combining those responsibilities. In making the case for consolidating these venues KPMG noted that the similarities involved in managing the venues would allow benefits to be gained from sharing experience and combining resources. They also found that it would provide the most effective way for the venues to work together to source and promote events and, by sharing opportunities commercial performance, community participation, utilisation and revenues could be improved.

A separate 2010 independent review completed by Ernst and Young for Treasury concerning the identification of efficiency opportunities also recommended a consolidation measure as a way of increasing revenue. Although Ernst and Young did not specifically consider consolidating the current entities, as it was not a part of the review scope, Ernst and Young proposed the establishment of a central events and marketing role to improve venue use by attracting more events. Ernst and Young's supporting analysis estimated the gross revenue benefit to be between half a million and two million dollars per annum from the second year. In addition the changes proposed in the bill are supported by arrangements in Queensland and Western Australia where a statewide approach to venues management already exists.

In summary, consolidating these important taxpayer-owned government venues will deliver more efficient services and better commercial outcomes for both the local regions and the people of New South Wales. Importantly, the bill will not impact on the continuation of existing contracts with suppliers, sporting organisations or sponsors from going ahead. It has also been drafted to provide the flexibility to include other taxpayer-owned government venues in the future should this be considered beneficial. The bill before the House will continue to deliver a high level of regional engagement and ensure that local communities remain closely involved in the management of their local sporting and entertainment venues. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned on motion by the Hon. Lynda Voltz and set down as an order of the day for a future day.