

# Dome casino group plays wrong faith card

The company seeking to turn the Millennium Dome into a supercasino has had to apologise for misrepresenting the views of local religious leaders.

Anschutz Entertainment Group (AEG) had claimed in documents posted on a government website that the Greenwich Peninsula Chaplaincy welcomed “the creation of 4,600 jobs” by the planned casino.

But the claim will have to be removed after protests from the chaplaincy, which represents the area’s different faiths, that it has strong reservations about gambling and the type of jobs that may be created.

The controversy is the latest to hit the Dome regeneration plan, which has been under the spotlight since The Times disclosed the relationship between John Prescott, the Deputy Prime Minister, and Philip Anschutz, the American tycoon who owns AEG. Mr Prescott has met Mr Anschutz seven times and enjoyed a two-night stay last year on his Colorado ranch. He has denied any impropriety in his contacts with Mr Anschutz.

AEG will be embarrassed by the dispute with the chaplaincy, just before this week’s public hearings at which casino proposals from six areas will be discussed.

The Rev Malcolm Torry said that he had protested after AEG had “imperfectly summarised” the views of the chaplaincy. In e-mails to AEG and Greenwich Council, Mr Torry said that he had had to send “a rather intemperate e-mail” to the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, which published the inaccurate summary on its website.

David Campbell, the chief executive of AEG Europe, responded

swiftly with an unreserved apology. He wrote: "I sincerely hope this genuine mistake does not stop us all moving forward..."

Mr Torry said yesterday: "These are very sensitive times for relationships between the faiths, particularly after recent events, and it is important that we should be careful about how the views of a body like ours are represented."

He added: "I am not attributing any malicious motives to this ... We are perfectly happy with the apology and consider the issue to be closed. They've admitted their mistake."

AEG has built a supercasino shell inside the Dome, even though the Casino Advisory Panel will not announce the winning site until December.