

WOMAN'S CHRISTIAN TEMPERANCE UNION of WA Inc

14th February 2009

Gambling Inquiry, Productivity Commission

GPO Box 1428

CANBERRA CITY ACT 2601

Dear Sir / Madam

We thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the Gambling Inquiry which we hope will result in overcoming some of the problems which are faced when unfortunate people become addicted to gambling resulting in a great deal of heartache to families in our various communities. Each year at State Convention, our organisation sends recommendations to politicians to try to help with the increasing number of problem gamblers. We note from your report in the Issues Paper, December 2008, that there are around 130,000 Australians estimated to have severe problems with their gambling. And a further 160,000 adults are estimated to have moderate problems, so that is over 290,000 problem gamblers. Therefore in this submission, we will make some similar recommendations as those discussed at our State Convention.

Because of its addictive nature, we would like to propose that gambling advertising, in all its forms, be banned. Young children see TV advertisements promoting the "Lotto life", and can be unduly influenced by the messages which they see. Tobacco advertising has been eliminated, and this has proved to be successful in limiting the amount of smoking which is currently affecting so many who have taken it up during their lifetime. This saves health care costs for those dying of lung cancer and other related illnesses.

Your report also shows that problem gamblers (non-lottery) account for about \$3.5 billion in expenditure annually, and lose on average around \$12,000 each per year. The prevalence of problem gambling is related to the degree of accessibility of gambling, particularly gaming machines. It is important that the number of gaming machines be reduced wherever possible, and that no further ones be provided. Perhaps a financial incentive or compensation could be given to the owners of clubs or other venues where gaming machines play such an important part of the revenue, for each machine which is rendered inoperative, and this could help to reduce problem gambling.

ATM facilities close to gaming areas should be eliminated, and no credit given for any form of gambling, particularly on line gambling.

-2-

Because of the large number of problem gamblers who want to get help with their addiction, more facilities should be available for counselling and financial planning. It seems that it is difficult to

access help and rehabilitation as there are insufficient facilities available. Surely more funds from the taxation received should be channelled into rehabilitation facilities. Perhaps there should also be more education into options such as self-exclusion arrangements at gambling venues.

Our organisation would like to see an educational module introduced into the curriculum of school children at both upper primary and secondary schools so that the problems which can arise for some susceptible people can be addressed, and hopefully, more can avoid becoming problem gamblers. More education on the results of this addiction could assist young people in better understanding that this could happen to them unless they are aware and can take appropriate steps before there is a problem. This educational program could also be funded from taxation revenue.

There are increasing negative results from problem gambling which affect the home and family in various ways. Some families will be deprived of food and shelter, and this may result in divorce or separation. Some face bankruptcy, others resort to crime to get additional revenue for their habit, some commit suicide, and there are many other negative results when gambling becomes a problem.

Many years ago when Tasmania had the first and only casino in Australia, the Lord Mayor of Hobart, Sir Douglas Plaister was asked how the casino had affected his city after 3 years. His reply was two fold, one for public consumption and one for private. His public assessment was brief – there had been a good result in tourism especially visitors from overseas which resulted in more profit for the city. But his private assessment was that it had been disastrous for the families of Hobart as so many problems arose for those in his city. Crime had increased fourfold, and there were many more suicides. Pawn shops and cash converter shops were created in large numbers when there was little demand for them prior to the casino opening. His assessment was that the casino was disastrous for families, but good for the economy. If we want a strong nation of happy and productive families, we must endeavour to reduce gambling opportunities and provide more assistance to problem gamblers and their families.

Thank you for considering these points.

Yours sincerely

Mrs M Martin

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