



ILLAWARRA MASTER BUILDERS CLUB LTD  
ABN 58 0010 29492  
61 Church Street Wollongong NSW 2520 PO Box 3081 Wollongong NSW 2500  
P: 02 4229 6466 F: 02 4229 1320 www.thebuilders.com.au

24 March 2009

Gambling Inquiry Productivity Commission  
GPO Box 1428  
Canberra City ACT 2601

Dear Commissioners

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission to the Productivity Commission Gambling Inquiry.

In the late 1940's and early 1950's a group of builders in the Wollongong area were holding meetings of the Master Builders Association of NSW in various venues in the town and in 1951 they decided to purchase land near the town centre and commenced the original building in 1952. The premises opened in 1953 when the Illawarra Master Builders Club was formed and a liquor licence was obtained. By 1955 it became evident that the original clubhouse and site were inadequate and a larger site in Church Street Wollongong was purchased which is the current location of the Club. A building committee was formed in 1960 to plan new Club premises which were ultimately completed and occupied in 1962 and officially opened in 1963 with a total membership of 1461 and a waiting list of 426.

The Illawarra Master Builders Club has since grown in size and amenities to become one of the leading Clubs in the Illawarra. The Illawarra Master Builders Club stands as a monument to a small group of builders who had faith in their own abilities and in the great coastal industrial district in which they lived.

Today the Illawarra Master Builders Club has a membership of over 13000 and we provide first class facilities to our members and their guests as well as visitors to the local area. Facilities including snooker and pool tables, carpet bowls, darts, sauna, auditorium, function rooms, bistro and a buffet restaurant are well patronised. Other Club facilities include Keno and TAB, a gaming room and approximately 200 on site parking spaces.

The Club supports a total of 14 internal club sporting groups as well as sponsorships of local cricket, football, rugby union, Australian Rules football, hockey and women's soccer in recent years.

One of the internal sporting clubs of which we are most proud is the "Saturday Morning Bowlers", a group of persons with intellectual and physical disabilities who last year

celebrated their 40th anniversary. These persons receive coaching and encouragement in the sport of indoor bowls.

We make our meeting and function rooms available without charge for regular meetings of sporting groups, service clubs, charities and organisations such as The Alzheimer's Support Group, Wollongong Self Advocacy Group and The Disability Trust. House with No Steps Community Access programmes regularly make use of our facilities for activities such as carpet bowls and snooker.

Each Christmas, in conjunction with our caterers, we provide a free lunch with drinks, prizes and giveaways for over 300 persons with disabilities and their carers. In November 2007 The NSW Department of Ageing, Disability & Home Care (DADHC) presented The Club with a Certificate of Appreciation for our continuing support of persons with a disability.

In addition to this in kind support The Club donated over \$150,000 to local charities, organisations and sporting groups in the 2007 / 2008 financial year. This is well in excess of our NSW CDSE requirements. Organisations that benefited from substantial cash donations in the past year include The Disabled Surfers Association, Vision Australia, The Shepherd Centre and Greenacres. The Club also supports by donation many other community organisations such as North Wollongong Surf Club, the local Volunteer Coast Guard, The State Emergency Service, Australian Aerial Patrol and Helicopter Rescue Services.

The main reason we can provide this outstanding community support is because we operate gaming machines. Gaming machines are the most important part of our business accounting for approximately 70% of our total revenue. We believe for the vast majority of people gaming machines are a safe and enjoyable form of entertainment. We recognise that a small number of people do develop a problem with gambling and we believe the initiatives proposed by ClubsAustralia would further reduce problem gambling.

All staff at The Illawarra Master Builders Club have been trained in and hold certificates for The Responsible Conduct of Gambling and we are a member of ClubsNSW ClubSAFE responsible gambling programme. Our Staff also undergo further training in the responsible service of alcohol, first aid, fire safety and safe food handling. The Illawarra Master Builders Club has an established reputation for providing a safe recreational environment where members and their guests can meet and enjoy the company of friends in very pleasant surroundings and can obtain quality cuisine and beverages at reasonable prices.

Regular raffles, promotions and activities are held for the benefit of the members and visitors to the Club. Regular daytime and evening concerts are held in the Club as well as bingo, free poker, trivia, karaoke, jazz and comedy. We provide a wide range of various activities which reflects the diversity of our membership base. Recently, the opening and closing concerts plus other events for the Wollongong City Council Seniors Week 2009 were held at The Illawarra Master Builders Club.

The Club employs over 50 staff and in 2008 paid approximately \$1.8 million in wages and superannuation as well as nearly \$90,000 in payroll tax to the NSW Government. Many of our staff have spent their whole careers in the Club industry and much of their training and experience is specifically geared towards the gaming and hospitality industry. Should our Club be forced to close it would be impossible for many of them to find alternative employment without substantial retraining and education.

The contribution that the Club makes to the local community via purchases of goods and services also helps the local economy. Regular building works, maintenance and renovations make a huge local contribution through building trades and material supply companies.

The Club paid nearly \$1.3 million in State Government Gaming Tax in 2008. This is almost double the amount we paid in 2002. Other costs have also risen considerably in the past few years. For example, huge increases in energy costs, insurance premiums and Bank and Government Charges have reduced our overall profitability substantially.

The Illawarra Master Builders Club is seriously concerned that any further changes to legislation that have the effect of reducing our revenue or increasing the level of taxation we pay will critically effect our financial viability. This in turn will impact harshly on our members and the local community who have come to rely on the support and services we provide.

Yours Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John A Carr". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

JOHN A CARR

PRESIDENT

Illawarra Master Builders Club