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Gambling Enquiry Productivity Commission
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The Productivity Commission,

This short submission is presented on behalf of Ryde-Eastwood Leagues Club to contribute to the inquiry into Australia's Gambling Industry.

Some brief points about Ryde-Eastwood Leagues Club are:-

- Situated in the Inner Western suburbs of Sydney at West Ryde
- Established in 1963 to support Rugby League and sport in the local community
- Licensed Club commenced in 1970
- 36,000 members
- Facilities include
 - 3 dining areas (Bistro, Coffee Club, Dining Room)
 - Auditorium
 - Function Centre
 - Bars
 - Fitness Centre and Swimming Pool
 - A smaller amalgamated Bowling Club
- Gambling activities
 - 274 poker machine entitlements
 - Keno
 - TAB

Ryde-Eastwood Leagues Club has a strong commitment to responsible gambling. The Club has been a member of Club Safe since its inception. The Club is also long term supporters of Christian Community Aid Eastwood which has a financial counselling service and ongoing training for staff in assisting persons who request assistance for problem gambling. We believe we have instilled a culture in staff that can alert Senior Management to potential gambling problems so they can monitor and offer support where possible.

Economic contribution:-

- Employment (as at 24/02/09) - 47 Full time
- 86 Part time
- 50 Casual

Plus 3 different catering contractors that provide employment to a further 16 full time, 26 part time and 40 casual staff and security/cleaning contractors employing a further 10 full time equivalent employees.

Taxation:-

Year ended 30/06/08

Poker machine license & tax	\$4,191,715
Federal taxes (company & FBT)	\$ 390,306
Payroll tax	\$ 312,708
Group tax (PAYE)	\$ 1,029,926
Rates	\$ 149,116
Total	\$6,073,771

Social contribution:-

CDSE Cash claimable	\$237,000
Year ended 31/08/08 Inkind (claimable)	\$25,200
Inkind (non-claimable)	\$129,500
Non CDSE contribution – direct rugby league support	\$331,600

The cash donations include support for local sporting organisations including Rugby Leagues, netball and swimming. The non-cash donations largely relate to “free” room hire and their non-cash subsidies to over one hundred organisations in the local community (refer attached addendum).

Social contribution is however, much more than cash or measurable non-cash benefits. The commission I am sure has access to all of this information on a state wide basis and in a form that is measurable and accurate.

The Club industry makes much of the “community support” aspects of Clubs and to know what that really means is to work in the environment and see the benefits a cultural or community hub provides.

To see the number of older people who use the Club’s facilities, not to gamble but because it is their social safety net for whatever reason. Quite often, it is the loss of a partner and something to fill the void in their lives. Some older people visit everyday, know and love the staff and are loved in return. Without “their Club” what would these people be doing.

We can name specific examples at our Club, like the 94 year old man who visits almost daily for morning coffee and social conversation/interaction. Examples like the many intellectually disabled members who use our fitness facilities, including one in particular who joined many years ago as part of a programme to assist him into community living and who is now a regular at the gym and pool and well known and liked throughout the Club – part of his community. Examples like the many disabled people who use our dining facilities because they are affordable and user friendly. I am sure every Club would have their own community examples probably even stronger than these but equally important to the people in their community.

The social contribution can also be the facilities the Club provides, like the Swimming Pool and Learn to Swim classes. Our pool was opened in 1998 and we had plans to run a small swim school in conjunction with our other fitness centre activities. The closure of the Sydney Olympic Pool and Ryde Aquatic Centre around that time for the Olympic Games created a strong demand for our Learn to Swim school and we have had over 1000 children enrolled consistently for the past 11 years. I often wonder what would have happened to kids swimming programs in the local area at that time (1998-2000) if we hadn't been able to fill the void.

It can be facilities like the local Bowling Club that we rescued via an amalgamation in 2000 and rebuilt. I recall my wife driving our children past the old Club at that time and telling them "that is the Club your father's Club is taking over" to which one of them replied "but those old people love that Club!".

Attempts have been made to quantify this support although it can never be truly estimated but there is no doubt it is a significant community contribution enriching the lives of the people in our community.

Clubs are for the community – we provide facilities that the community needs. If we don't provide them we become irrelevant. The income generated from poker machines assists in providing these facilities. Poker machines themselves are a facility. With a membership of 35,000 people it is obvious that a majority of our members don't join the Club to play the pokies. They join because of the other facilities we provide, because we provide something that they value in their lives. However, the income from gaming machines is necessary to enable us to provide these facilities and provide this support.

Yours faithfully,



Chris McCarthy
General Manager

Ryde- Eastwood Leagues Club