

**Queensland  
Responsible Gambling  
Advisory Committee  
(RGAC)**

**Submission**

**to the**

**Productivity Commission  
Inquiry into Gambling**

**(March 2009)**

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## **RECOMMENDATION**

### **The Queensland Responsible Gambling Advisory Committee (RGAC) Model**

The Queensland RGAC is a partnership between community, industry and Government. Its membership includes gambling support providers, industry peak bodies, community groups and Government.

The RGAC is recognised in the *Queensland Responsible Gambling Strategy* as being the cornerstone of the Queensland Government's approach to responsible gambling and a primary source of advice on emerging social concerns associated with gambling in Queensland.

The Committee is constantly moving forward. As new challenges are presented they are included on either or both the one year and three year workplans. When new challenges are presented there is robust discussion held. During these discussions members conscientiously observe the vision and values of the RGAC.

As seen with the successes listed previously, the RGAC is a working committee delivering practical outcomes. The RGAC has been highly successful in its approach to responsible gambling and the model should be considered in other jurisdictions in Australia.

## INTRODUCTION TO THE QUEENSLAND RGAC

### ***Who we are***

In 1994, the Queensland community sector and gambling industry representatives began meeting informally with the Queensland Department of Families, Youth and Community Care (now the Department of Communities) about the potential impacts of gambling on the community and industry.

These informal discussions, together with a recommendation from research into the social and economic impacts of gaming machines, paved the way to formally establish the Problem Gambling Advisory Committee, chaired by the Director-General, Department of Families, Youth and Community Care, in August 1996.

The Committee's name was changed to the Responsible Gambling Advisory Committee (RGAC) in 1998 to reflect its proactive approach to harm minimisation and its recognition that gambling is a leisure activity for many people although harmful effects may be experienced by a small proportion of the population.

The RGAC is a Queensland partnership between community, industry and government. Its membership includes gambling support providers, industry peak bodies, community groups and government agencies.

Since 2000, the RGAC has reported to the Minister responsible for gambling with the roles of Chair and Deputy Chair alternating annually between community sector and industry members. The RGAC provides advice through the Minister responsible for gambling to the Queensland Government on minimising any negative impacts of gambling and developing a responsible gambling environment.

The RGAC is recognised in the *Queensland Responsible Gambling Strategy* as being the cornerstone of the Queensland Government's approach to responsible gambling and a primary source of advice on emerging social concerns associated with gambling in Queensland.

## Our Vision and Values

### Our vision

*Community, industry and government working together to achieve responsible gambling.*

### Our values

Our members often bring diverse points of view about issues to the committee. The following values underpin the ways in which we are able to deal with conflict and work together: Integrity, Collaboration and Excellence.

#### *Integrity*

Our commitment to integrity is demonstrated by:

- articulating differences of opinion
- respecting diversity of views
- striving to understand different perspectives
- declaring conflicts of interest
- maintaining agreed levels of confidentiality
- building an environment of honesty, trust and openness
- working ethically.

#### *Collaboration*

Our commitment to collaboration is demonstrated by:

- developing proactive partnerships to achieve agreed outcomes
- engaging in consultation beyond the Responsible Gambling Advisory Committee to build sustainable and productive partnerships
- willingness to share divergent views in a supportive environment
- members sharing relevant information about their organisations
- raising relevant issues by member organisations
- working towards negotiated positions
- implementing agreed decisions through members' organisational channels
- completing tasks in a professional and timely manner
- attending meetings, task groups and other related activities.

#### *Excellence*

Our commitment to excellence is demonstrated by:

- members informing each other about innovative practices
- participating in activities that may challenge existing practices
- anticipating emerging needs
- advocating for the Responsible Gambling Advisory Committee and its work
- using an evidence-base to identify, develop and implement best practice for continuous improvement
- searching for new and innovative ways to achieve our goals
- promoting responsible gambling initiatives through members' organisational channels.

## Governance

The *Queensland Responsible Gambling Strategy* includes promoting partnerships to address state-wide and local gambling issues and concerns. The Responsible Gambling Advisory Committee (RGAC) is recognised in the Strategy as the state-wide body bringing together diverse groups to achieve sustainable and responsible approaches to gambling. The RGAC is supported by a Secretariat provided by the Policy and Research Branch of the Office of Liquor, Gaming and Racing, Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation.

## Terms of reference

The RGAC is an advisory body reporting to the Minister responsible for gambling on strategies to minimise the negative impacts of gambling on Queenslanders and, responsible gambling issues. The RGAC *Terms of Reference and Operating Guidelines* specify its key functions are to:

- provide advice on:
  - emerging social concerns, and related economic issues, associated with problem gambling in Queensland
  - the formulation and implementation of responsible gambling policies and initiatives to ensure a socially responsible industry
  - the development and implementation of a comprehensive framework for responsible gambling programs focussing on prevention, community protection and rehabilitation
  - research priorities to inform effective prevention, community protection and rehabilitation strategies
- promote and monitor partnerships between the community, industry and government to address social concerns related to gambling
- provide a forum for the exchange of information and views between community, industry and government concerning issues relating to responsible gambling.

## **Regional Meeting and Forum**

The Responsible Gambling Advisory Committee (RGAC) is committed to ensuring its advice take into account cultural diversity and the regional differences across the State. This commitment is demonstrated by holding a meeting and an associated Community Services and Industry Responsible Gambling Forum (the Forum) in a regional centre of Queensland each year.

In 2008, the regional meeting was held on the Sunshine Coast. The organisations represented on the RGAC were encouraged to invite key local stakeholders to attend the meeting and to present local perspectives on responsible gambling issues.

At the Forum, interaction between the local stakeholders and the RGAC representatives was encouraged to:

- provide RGAC members with the opportunity to gain a perspective on any regional differences in relation to responsible gambling issues
- provide local stakeholders with perspectives on the RGAC's approach to issues previously identified by local stakeholders as being important
- improve the RGAC's ability to advise the Minister responsible for gambling in relation to the impact of regional differences on responsible gambling issues
- demonstrate the constructive RGAC consultative model to local community and industry representatives.

## Our Successes

Since 1996 community, industry and government representatives have worked together on the RGAC to help achieve responsible approaches to gambling. During this period of time, the RGAC has contributed to many successes including:

- implementing the Gambling Help Line Pilot Project
- contributing to the Review of Gaming and Green Paper that led to the development of the *Policy Direction for Gambling in Queensland* ([further information on the Policy Direction is provided in this document](#)).
- progressing the Government's *Queensland Responsible Gambling Strategy*, particularly in relation to the *Queensland Responsible Gambling Code of Practice* (the Code of Practice) ([further information on the Strategy and the Code of Practice is provided in this document](#)).
- supporting the implementation of the Code of Practice through the *Queensland Responsible Gambling Training Framework for Industry* and the *Queensland Responsible Gambling Code of Practice Industry Training Kit* ([further information on the Training Framework and Training Kit is provided in this document](#)).
- developing, through the RGAC's working party process, an *Exclusions Model with Pathways and Protocols*, which specifically encourages self-exclusion by those adversely affected by their gambling behaviour.
- developing the *Queensland Responsible Gambling Advertising and Promotions Guideline* designed to assist the gambling industry implement the responsible gambling advertising and promotions practices contained in the Code of Practice ([further information on the Advertising and Promotions Guideline is provided in this document](#)).
- developing the *Queensland Responsible Gambling Guidelines for Player Loyalty Programs* to support the Code of Practice where the functions and features of gambling loyalty programs are concerned ([further information on the Guidelines for Player Loyalty Programs is provided in this document](#)).
- supporting and assisting in the development of various campaigns, information brochures and quick guides necessary to further progress the Government's *Queensland Responsible Gambling Strategy*
- considering the recommendations of the *Queensland Responsible Gambling Code of Practice Report on the Sustainability Review* ([further information on the Sustainability Review is provided in this document](#)).
- contributing to the review of the Evaluation of the *Queensland Responsible Gambling Strategy*
- developing through the RGAC's working party processes the Rights and Responsibilities of stakeholders ([further information on the Rights and Responsibilities of stakeholders is provided in this document](#)).
- providing advice through the Exclusions Working Party to contribute to the Review of the Queensland Exclusions Regime ([further information on exclusions is provided in this document](#)).



## Workplans

Members of the RGAC have developed short term (one-year) and long term (three-year) workplans to fulfil the requirements of their roles and responsibilities outlined in the Committee's Terms of Reference.

### Purpose

The purpose of the workplans are to enable the RGAC to fulfil its responsibilities to provide advice to the Minister in an effective manner on social concerns, policies and initiatives, prevention, community protection and rehabilitation programs, and research priorities that relate to the provision of safe and supportive environments for responsible gambling in Queensland. The workplans will also assist in monitoring the implementation of the *Queensland Responsible Gambling Strategy* by progressing initiatives through the organisational channels represented by members of the RGAC. Significant issues that are identified for consideration by the RGAC will be listed in the workplans under the categories of Consumer Protection, Prevention, Rehabilitation, Research and Policy.

### Objectives

RGAC members are encouraged to clearly define issues for their individual sectors, and bring them forward for discussion and assessment as items to be included on the workplans.

The workplans will provide a framework to:

- identify and allocate issues to consumer protection, prevention, rehabilitation, research or policy
- nominate specific activities as deliverables that will provide knowledge about issues, and/or address issues, and
- include strategies to accomplish activities effectively:
  - provide measures for outcomes
  - timelines for activities
  - monitor the status of the issue.

Short-term workplans are to remain in effect for 12 months:

- issues/items will be identified and described
- activities to investigate issues/items will have steps outlined to achieve objectives
- defined activities will have measurable outcomes and timelines
- activities will be tracked against measures, outcomes, and timelines to meet objectives.

Long term workplans provide the longer range view and work direction:

- content will include defined work items with measurable outcomes
  - broader conceptual ideas can be included.

New items can be included in the short-term and long-term workplans as issues arise, subject to agreement of the RGAC.

Items on the short term 2009 workplans are:

**Consumer Protection**

1. Review of the Code of Practice and active participation of industry and community services sectors.
2. Feedback on implementation of the Code of Practice with relevance to assisting gambling help outcomes.
3. Consequences of technology on responsible gambling
4. Exclusions
5. Rights and Responsibilities
6. Promotion of poker machines

**Prevention**

7. Young people and gambling
8. Community education and awareness

**Rehabilitation**

9. Strategic issues relating to trends, effectiveness and promotion of the gambling help system
10. Advice on relevant statistics from Gambling Help Services administered by Department of Communities
11. Advice on the Framework for Enhancement of the Gambling Help Services System

**Research**

12. Provide input to the research agenda
13. Respond to recent research studies

**Policy**

14. Interface with the Queensland Gaming Commission
15. Continue expanding the collective knowledge about each sector
16. Provide input into the evaluation of the Queensland Responsible Gambling Strategy
17. Review of specific aspects of the Gaming Machine Act

## **Policy Direction for Gambling in Queensland (April 2000)**

The *Policy Direction for Gambling in Queensland* was the result of a twelve month examination of gambling in Queensland. The Policy Direction was developed in an environment of extensive public consultation comprising the Review of Gaming in Queensland and the *Green Paper on gaming in Queensland*.

The initiatives contained in this document reflected the Government's response to growing public concern over the growth of gambling in the community and in particular the issue of growth in gaming machines. The Government was encouraged by the widespread community support for the issues encapsulated in the Green Paper.

As a result, the Policy Direction articulates the Government's strong commitment to addressing the social and economic issues that have arisen from the rapid growth in gambling in Queensland while preserving the many benefits that the industry continues to provide. To this end the Policy Direction is centred on the two fundamental principles of greater balance and better coordination. Social costs generated by gambling are weighed against the benefits and proactive measures are implemented to minimise social problems and provide support for those individuals who encounter problems with the control of their gambling.

### ***Responsible Gambling***

The Responsible Gambling Advisory Committee (RGAC) is formally endorsed in the Policy Direction as the primary source of advice on emerging social concerns associated with gambling in Queensland. The RGAC reports directly to the Minister responsible for gambling. The Committee comprises members from gambling operators, community groups and Government.

The Government has acknowledged the achievements of the RGAC in identifying strategies to reduce the negative social impacts of gambling and has sought to continue to advance the work of the Committee.

In this regard, the RGAC supported the implementation of a comprehensive Queensland Responsible Gambling Strategy, in consultation with key industry stakeholders.

The Queensland Responsible Gambling Strategy focuses on three key objectives:

- Prevention
- Protection
- Rehabilitation.

These three key objectives are encompassed in the RGAC's one-year and three-year workplans.

## **The Queensland Responsible Gambling Strategy (2002)**

The *Queensland Responsible Gambling Strategy* is a partnership approach which consolidates the significant achievements already made towards responsible gambling in Queensland and provides the framework for future action. The proactive measures contained in the Strategy aim to minimise the likelihood of social problems arising and provide support for those who encounter problems with gambling. Above all, the Strategy contributes to the balance between the social and economic benefits and costs of gambling in Queensland.

In April 2000, the Government released the Policy Direction for Gambling in Queensland following extensive public consultation. The Policy Direction highlighted the need for an overarching strategy to address social issues that had arisen from the rapid growth of gambling in Queensland. The initiatives outlined in the Strategy reflect the Government's response to public concern about the potential adverse impacts of gambling.

In Queensland, the unique partnership established between the community, gambling industry and the Queensland Government is the cornerstone of the Government's approach to responsible gambling. The RGAC provides a forum for diverse interest groups to work together to achieve ethical and responsible approaches to gambling. This partnership is essential to the Government's future achievements in responsible gambling.

The Strategy has six priority action areas. Each of these contributes to reducing the prevalence of problem gambling and the impact of problem gambling when it does arise. These are:

1. enhance responsible gambling policies and programs through research
2. increase community knowledge and awareness of the impacts of gambling
3. reduce the risk factors for problem gambling through early intervention
4. develop a statewide system of problem gambling treatment and support services
5. ensure gambling environments are safer and more supportive for consumers
6. promote partnerships to address statewide and local gambling issues and concerns

The Office of Liquor, Gaming and Racing has been undertaking an evaluation of the Strategy in support of the Government's commitment to ensuring an appropriate balance between the social and economic benefits and costs of gambling in Queensland. The RGAC is a key contributor towards the evaluation which examines the performance and effectiveness of the Strategy, and the ongoing relevance of its current content, structure and vision.

In 2009 a report on the evaluation of the Strategy will be forwarded to the Minister and subject to approval, will help inform the development of a revised Queensland Responsible Gambling Strategy that reflects current social, environmental and technological conditions. This will also help to ensure the Queensland Government maintains a robust and innovative strategy that continues to sustain responsible gambling environments that minimise harm to individuals, families and communities.

## **Queensland Responsible Gambling Code of Practice (2002, 2004) and the Sustainability Review**

The *Queensland Responsible Gambling Code of Practice* (Code of Practice) was developed by the RGAC over a five year period. In developing the Code of Practice the RGAC has consulted extensively with key stakeholders within and outside the gambling industry. The Code of Practice represents a voluntary, whole-of-industry commitment to best practice in the provision of responsible gambling. It is the first whole-of-industry responsible gambling code of practice in Australia. In recognition of the diversity within the gambling industry, the Code of Practice gives consideration to how the practices apply to each sector of the industry.

The Code of Practice and the *Queensland Responsible Gambling Resource Manual* developed by the RGAC, supports and progresses the aims and objectives of the *Queensland Responsible Gambling Strategy* developed by the Queensland Government.

The Code of Practice is based on shared commitment by gambling industry providers to the guiding principle of ethical and responsible behaviour. This principle recognises the importance of customers' wellbeing with a focus on minimising the potential harm of gambling. In addition, customers' rights to privacy are respected.

The Code of Practice commits the gambling industry to implement and adhere to responsible gambling practices, with a particular focus on customer protection measures. These practices are organised into the following broad categories:

- Provision of information
- Interaction with customers and community
- Exclusion provisions
- Physical environment
- Financial transactions
- Advertising and promotions

The RGAC, with the support of the Office of Liquor, Gaming and Racing, has provided the Code of Practice for the gambling industry to proactively promote responsible gambling in Queensland.

The Code of Practice is a living document and is periodically reviewed to evaluate outcomes and the effectiveness of the practices.

The Code of Practice is an important component of the Queensland Responsible Gambling Strategy. The Code of Practice Sustainability Review is the most recent review undertaken into the Code of Practice and a Report on the Sustainability Review will be considered in 2009 by the Minister responsible for gambling. The RGAC was instrumental in developing the Code of Practice and its input has been essential in considering the future sustainability of responsible gambling practices in Queensland.

## **Queensland Responsible Gambling Training Framework for Industry**

The *Queensland Responsible Gambling Training Framework for Industry* provides a proactive and voluntary whole-of-industry approach to the promotion of responsible gambling training programs.

The training framework supports the implementation of the Code of Practice which was developed by the RGAC. Key stakeholders within and outside the gambling industry and training industry contributed to the development of the training framework.

The training framework outlines criteria for the development and implementation of responsible gambling training programs, the specific learning outcomes to be demonstrated by gambling provider employees, as well as benchmarks to indicate industry best practice.

The Government in its initiatives package of 17 April 2008 ensured that the mandatory Responsible Service of gambling (RSG) training for club and hotel employees involved in the delivery of gaming-related services would be legislated.

## **Queensland Responsible Gambling Code of Practice Industry Training Kit (2005)**

The *Queensland Responsible Gambling Code of Practice Industry Training Kit* was launched by the Minister, at the December 2005 RGAC meeting. The kit is an in-house training workbook for managers and gambling venue employees designed to provide the skills and knowledge required to provide a responsible gambling service in the work place.

## **Responsible Gambling Teaching Resource Kit (2004)**

The RGAC supported the development of responsible gambling curriculum materials as a targeted education strategy for primary and secondary school students. The materials were evaluated by teachers and students and judged to be effective in increasing their knowledge about gambling and its potential effects on individuals and communities. Some of these materials were incorporated into the *Responsible Gambling Teaching Resource Kit* which was distributed to most primary and secondary schools in Queensland.

## **Exclusions Model**

The RGAC developed an exclusion model that was adopted by the Government. Exclusion legislation commenced in Queensland on 8 May 2005 to allow persons to seek self-exclusion from gambling venues and similarly to allow gambling venues to impose entry prohibitions on certain persons. The RGAC continues to monitor the operation of the exclusion provisions.

In 2006 the RGAC recognised the need for more readily available exclusion information for the community and provided advice on the timely development of the Information on Gambling Exclusions brochure. This brochure was distributed throughout Queensland to all relevant gambling venues and also to the Gambling Help services.

## **Queensland Responsible Gambling Advertising and Promotions Guideline (2005)**

Another example of the RGAC's contribution to improving Queensland's responsible gambling environment was the *Queensland Responsible Gambling Advertising and Promotions Guideline*. The Guideline was developed through the RGAC working party processes to assist the gambling industry implement the responsible gambling advertising and promotions practices contained in the Code of Practice.

## **Queensland Responsible Gambling Guidelines for Player Loyalty Programs (2007)**

The RGAC Advertising and Promotions Working Party developed specific guidelines relating to the functions and features of Player Loyalty Programs. In August 2007 the *Player Loyalty Program Guidelines* were released as an addendum to the Queensland Responsible Gambling Advertising and Promotions Guideline.

## **Rights and Responsibilities of Stakeholders**

Through the RGAC working party processes the Committee is currently looking at producing a document which will provide the rights and responsibilities of gambling stakeholders. This includes both consumers and gambling providers. This is currently a work in progress.

## **Responsible Gambling Research Program**

The responsible gambling research program is designed to improve knowledge of gambling activity and issues in Queensland and to explore effective prevention, protection and rehabilitation measures.

The RGAC continues to provide valuable advice and feedback on research in regard to:

- The annual responsible gambling research grants program and associated projects
- The outcomes of research projects conducted by the Office of Liquor, Gaming and Racing and the Office of Economic and Statistical Research (Queensland Household Gambling Survey and Gaming Machine Industry Surveys)

The findings of these surveys continue to inform RGAC members and other key stakeholders including the Government and the wider community when considering policy and providing advice about gambling issues.