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Gambling Inquiry  
Productivity Commission  
GPO Box 1428  
**CANBERRA ACT 2601**

26<sup>th</sup> November 2009

Dear Sir/Madam,

**Re: Response to the Draft Report on Gambling**

On behalf of the Management Committee and indeed the Members of the Chinchilla RSL Memorial Club we would like to pass on their concerns on your Draft Report.

The Chinchilla RSL Memorial Club is situated some four hundred kilometres from Brisbane in a north westerly direction on the western edge of the Darling Downs. Chinchilla is a relatively small country town with a population of less than 6,500.

The Chinchilla RSL Memorial Club has serviced the local community for over sixty years. It was originally established to meet the requirements of returning servicemen and women and their families. Whilst we still fulfil and take this role seriously we now also play an important role in the social life of the district and provide a great deal of support to the local community.

We currently employ 9 full-time, three part-time and a pool of at least 30 casual employees. The wages alone that we pay into the local community offer considerable input to the economy of the town and district.

Our current financial membership of 3,152 is indicative of the importance and relevance the local community places on the Club.

The Club endeavours to offer a full range of services to both our members and visitors included in which are dining, entertainment, meeting and function rooms and of course gaming. Our gaming facilities include 30 poker machines (approval to 40 held), Keno, Bingo and Club TAB.

Within the Club we also sponsor various groups such as a Billiards Club, Euchre Club and a Poker Club (cards).

As a Club we have always demonstrated a commitment to Responsible Gambling. We were one of the first Clubs in the State to commit to the Queensland Responsible Gambling Code of Practice and have always ensured

our gaming staff are fully trained in Responsible Service of Gambling and key staff have been trained in the role of Customer Liaison Officers.

Our commitment has in fact been acknowledged through a number of Certificates of Acknowledgement we have received from the Gambling Help Line and in 2007 the Club was awarded a Special Achievement Award for Responsible Service of Gambling at the annual Clubs Queensland Awards.

While we welcome the gambling inquiry, we are very concerned about the negative impact that the draft findings and recommendations would have on the financial viability of our Club. This would most likely include loss of jobs, curtailment of services we currently provide to our members and visitors and, most importantly, a reduction in our community contributions.

During the Club's last financial year (ended 31<sup>st</sup> December 2008) we contributed in excess of \$48,000 in cash and in-kind support to numerous organisations throughout the local district and indeed the wider Australian community. The list of organisations that we support are too numerous to detail in this letter, however, it includes local junior and senior sporting groups, schools, service clubs, Chamber of Commerce, Blue Care etc.

There is no way we could sustain this level of community support if the adverse measures proposed in the Draft Report are introduced. The harsh reality for our Club would be to simply close our doors, leaving our members and the local community without the much needed services and facilities that is made possible through responsible community gaming.

We urge the Productivity Commission to seriously consider the practical reality of their recommendations. In particular, we urge the Productivity Commission to consider the following when finalising its final report:-

- The rate of problem gambling has declined across Australia because of the extensive measures that have been implemented since 1999. In Queensland, this now stands at 0.47% of the adult population – measured through one of the largest surveys of its kind in the world.
- We need firm data, not estimates, to build effective policy. Therefore, nationally consistent research is needed if there is to be a 'true' understanding of the gambling sector. A 'one size fits all' approach is not possible because each State is different, with different regulations, tax rates, maturity of market, ownership model and splits between private and community ownership of gaming.
- Gaming serves different purposes in different venues. For Clubs which are not-for-profit entities, gaming is a community initiative, which supports a range of community services and facilities. It is critical that there is a strong demarcation between community gaming and for-profit or entrepreneurial gaming.

- While technological innovations open many possibilities for harm minimisation, it is critical that any technology is evaluated first and then, based on solid evidence, accepted or rejected. Queensland in this regard is far ahead with its card-based gaming trials. The same also applies to any policy change (i.e. modelling to determine impact and effectiveness of the policy change before accepting or rejecting the policy platform).

Finally, it is our view that the Productivity Commission should strive to achieve a balance in the final report between the needs of gaming venues and their patrons (of whom only a very small number have a gambling problem). There should also be an acknowledgement of the extensive responsible gambling measures that are already in place (many of which have produced spectacular positive outcomes). Some attention should also be given to the concept of personal responsibility as there is a limit to which controls can be placed on gambling venues.

Should the draft recommendations remain unchanged, the Productivity Commission may like to consider how sport and the considerable support for welfare, charities and the like will be funded, as it is highly likely that community clubs will not be in a position to provide their current level of support. This is particularly relevant in smaller isolated rural areas like ours where access to these are already limited. In fact, we would expect the demise of a significant number of community clubs, like ours, should all the recommendations proposed be taken up by respective Governments throughout Australia.

We hope that this will assist you in your understanding of the relevance and importance of responsible gaming in community clubs and the impact the draft recommendations may have on such rural communities as ours.



Yours sincerely,



**AW MINNIS**  
**SECRETARY/MANAGER**