

TE RŌPŪ ĀWHINA MATE PETIPETI O AOTEAROA
**Problem Gambling Foundation
of New Zealand**



SUBMISSION TO THE PRODUCTIVITY COMMISSION DRAFT REPORT ON GAMBLING

2 December 2009

Gambling Inquiry
Productivity Commission
GBO Box 1428
Canberra City ACT 2061
AUSTRALIA

Australian Productivity Commission Report on Gambling

I am writing this submission on behalf of the Problem Gambling Foundation of New Zealand.

The Problem Gambling Foundation is the largest organisation of its kind, providing services to those impacted by gambling as well as a range of public health activities.

In total we employ some 63 staff providing services across New Zealand.

The Productivity Commission Report is significant for us. As our closest neighbour policy issues in Australia has a significant impact within New Zealand.

In addition a number of the recommendations in the Productivity Commission have direct impact in this country.

Our submission is:

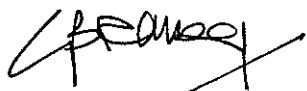
1. We applaud the work done by the Productivity Commission in producing a thorough and considered report. In particular we support the thrust of a public health approach to gambling which appears to underpin the recommendations of the Commission's report. A public health approach has been in operation in New Zealand since 2003 when it was established as the basis for the Gambling Act. A public health approach has resulted in a steady decline in pokie machine numbers, total spend on machines and a marked increase in public awareness of gambling as a social and health issue. We believe that this approach needs to be made more explicit within the report and offer our experience as a mechanism for this.

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2. We specifically refer to the question posed in Chapter 15 regarding New Zealand's involvement in a possible replacement to the Gambling Research Authority. In principle we support this, although there are a number of practical details to be worked out. From a New Zealand perspective these would include, but not be limited to, ensuring New Zealand's concerns were met in the overall objectives of the research programme, and appropriate trans-Tasman governance arrangements. In addition we would specifically suggest that there is no industry representation at governance or management level. Our view is that such involvement (as seen in other countries) compromises the quality of the research agenda and research projects.
3. We support the move to pre-commitment. In our view the default settings for pre-commitment needs to be as low as possible in both the terms of time and spend.
4. One of the greatest issues facing problem gambling service providers, (after their relationships with the industry), is economies of scale. As a general rule problem gambling providers tend to be small and under resourced organisations. It is in our experience that it is important that economies of scale can be achieved and maintained to ensure appropriate resourcing for programmes and an active public health approach.
5. The Productivity Commission report suggests a liberalisation of internet gambling. While this potential revenue source is attractive to governments PGF urges caution. Research is limited internationally but does show that there are significant problem gambling issues with internet gambling. As a result we urge a precautionary approach to this issue.

We applaud the Productivity Commission's findings that a reduction in gambling has a significant social and economic benefit. This case is often controversial. Accepting this case gives a framework for gambling research and policy.

We do not wish to be heard in support of this submission.



Graeme Ramsey
Chief Executive Officer