

SEAFORTH BOWLS CLUB INC.

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1/12/2009

Gambling Inquiry- Draft Report
Productivity Commission
Locked Bag 2, Collins St.
East Melbourne
VIC 8003

Dear Sir

Re: Club Response to the Draft Report on Gambling

I have been asked by the Management Committee of my Community Club to convey the serious concerns of our club and its members on your Draft Report on Gambling.

Our Club is situated at Seaforth, approx. 40 km north of Mackay. The principal purpose of our existence, as stated in our constitution, is the provision and maintenance of the game of Lawn Bowls. Also to provide amenities for its members.

Seaforth Bowls Club is the only facility of it's kind within a 40km radius.

Seaforth has an approx. population of 1000, the age sector ranges from children through to retirees. At present we have approx 600 members, and these members visit the Club not only to play Lawn Bowls but to utilize the Club for our other services and facilities we have to offer. Apart from gaming, these mainly include socialization, dining and entertainment. Our gaming facilities include 25 poker machines, TAB and a Keno outlet.

We currently employ 3 full time and 7 casual employees. We are very active within our community. We are in the process of joining forces with SES and RFS in conjunction with Clubs QLD towards the Emergency Response Support. To put it in short, Seaforth Bowls Club is the "hub" of our community.

It is in our absolute interest to ensure that our gaming services are conducted in a responsible manner. We subscribe to the Queensland Responsible Gambling Code of

Practice and are very much aware of our obligations and responsibilities to people who may have a gambling problem.

While we welcome the gaming inquiry, as it was long overdue, 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, most importantly, a reduction in our community contributions.

If the adverse measures such as those contained in the Draft report are placed on community gaming we will no longer be able to sustain our high level of community support. The harsh reality for our club would be simply close our doors, leaving our members and the local community without the much need services and facilities that is made possible through 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 finalizing 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 can 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 & 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.

Finally, our view is 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 acknowledgement of the extensive responsible gaming 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. In fact, we would expect the demise of a significant number of community clubs should all the recommendations be taken up by respective Governments throughout Australia.

I hope the above is of some assistance in understanding the nature and importance of gaming in community clubs and the impact the draft recommendations may have on community gaming.

On behalf of the Board

Yours Truly

Nerissa Brooker

Secretary