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Contact: Susan Gibbeson on 9725 0700

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Productivity Commission
Locked Bag 2
Collins Street East
Melbourne VICTORIA 8003

Dear Sir/Madam

COMMENTS ON PRODUCTIVITY COMMISSION DRAFT REPORT - GAMBLING

The Fairfield Context

Fairfield Council adopted a policy on Gambling in 2001. This Policy acknowledges gambling as a recreational activity. The Policy also acknowledges that in cases of 'problem gambling', harm is caused to the gambler, their family and often to community members, organisations and employers. Council's Policy aims to reduce the health, social and economic costs of problem gambling while still retaining the benefits for recreational gamblers. Council's Policy acknowledges gaming machines as responsible for most expenditure and the highest number of problem gamblers.

Fairfield Local Government Area presumably has the highest level of losses through gaming machines in NSW. This is evidenced by the amount of money available through the Fairfield Community Development Support Expenditure Scheme (CDSE grants). In 2008/9 this scheme provided approximately \$1,784,628 to support activities in the community. This is more than double the amount available in the LGA with the second highest amount of money available through the scheme. Given these funds are sourced from the losses made by individuals using gambling machines, it is reasonable to assume that Fairfield LGA is likely to suffer negative impact from problem gambling as well as this positive impact of gambling.

Comment

The goals outlined in the 2009 Draft Report into Gambling align with the policy position of Fairfield City Council and are supported. The focus on harm minimisation while addressing community expectations and improved functionality is encouraged.

As Fairfield City has a high number of gaming machines and presumably a high level of problem gambling, the possible actions outlined in the report to achieve the goals outlined are also encouraged. Strategies that support all members of the community are welcome and are necessary to assist local government in developing communities with high levels of well-being.

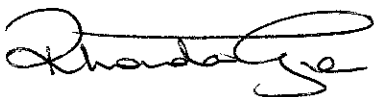
Enhancing services to reach a greater number of gamblers who are defined as problem gamblers, as well as gamblers who suffer negative impacts of their gambling without being formally 'at risk' or 'problem' is encouraged and supported. Clearly, this assistance and counselling needs to be provided in culturally and linguistically appropriate ways to further enhance the effectiveness of the service. The number of problem gamblers who do not currently seek assistance outlined in the Draft Report is of concern in the Fairfield context. Strategies to prevent any level of negative impact occurring or to prevent gamblers transitioning from being recreational gamblers to 'at risk' or 'problem gamblers' are encouraged.

The proposal to introduce a universal pre-commitment system for gaming machines that enables individuals to set a binding limit on their future expenditure is likely to be of particular benefit in the Fairfield context. This is due to the fact that there are numerous venues with gaming machines in the immediate area, increasing the ease with which individuals can change venue to avoid venue-only self exclusions. The universal pre-commitment system is supported and considered of high value in assisting individuals to self-manage their behaviour.

Coordination of research programs, relocation of ATM's and improvement and alignment of legislation, regulation and transparency are also supported and encouraged.

Fairfield City has a significant gambling sector. The 2009 Draft Report into Gambling by the Productivity Commission has provided helpful research, comment, observation and proposals which can be expected to assist the community as well as individual gamblers if implemented. The proposals and direction of the Draft Report is supported and implementation encouraged.

Yours faithfully



for Susan Gibbeson
Senior Policy Advisor: Social, Health and Housing