



**NORTHS**  
Leagues & Services Club

ABN 62 009 847 278

14 December 2009

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

Dear Sir

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

Our club is situated in Kallangur, a northern suburb of Brisbane. The principal objects of our existence, as stated in our Constitution, is to:-

- Preserve and foster the ideals and traditions of the sport of rugby league both nationally and in the State of QLD.
- To promote, encourage and support the playing of rugby league by Norths, The Old Boys and the Juniors.
- To provide members and all authorised persons the usual privileges, advantages, conveniences, entertainment, food and beverages and means of enjoyment that are usually provided to members of a licensed social club.
- To establish, maintain and provide one or more social club premises for the enjoyment of members and their guests and authorized persons.

One of our clubs leases two football fields and that club is situated next to the fields.

As you can see from our objectives and aims this club provides important social and sporting facilities and funds for future development of our players.

We currently employ 52 casual, 31 part-time and 37 full-time employees.

We have a total of 21,888 members.

Our members and guests visit the club for a range of services and facilities. Apart from gaming, these mainly include dining, entertainment, to attend functions or meetings, as well as general community socializing. Our gaming facilities include 260 poker machines, Tab and Keno. We also hold weekly Bingo sessions.

*Your home of good times*

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 gambling 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, thus impacting on the local community. This would most likely delay or prevent any improvements to the member's facilities, curtailment of services we currently provide to our members, resulting in loss of jobs and, most importantly, a reduction in our community contributions.

In the last financial year, we returned a total of \$185,000 in cash and in-kind support to the community. This went towards a range of projects, donations to our local RSL for Anzac Day, services for junior sports coaching, Crime Stoppers, Smile for a Child, local schools and community clubs. These and other projects were all largely funded through community gaming at our club.

There is no way we can sustain this level of community support if adverse measures such as those contained in the Draft Report are placed on community gaming. 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 community gaming.

We do not only supply gaming facilities for our members and guests, we also supply, reasonably priced meals, drinks and entertainment and a social meeting place.

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 the 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 going 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 & 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, 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 an acknowledgment 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.

The Community Benefit Fund also provides grants to the small community clubs – would this money still be available?

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.

Yours sincerely

Donna Douglass

**Operations Manager**

Norths Leagues & Services Club