



ASPLEY AUSTRALIAN FOOTBALL AND SPORTING CLUB LTD

Incorporated in Queensland A.C.N. 010 716 202 A.B.N. 52 010 716 202

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15 December 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 board 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 Carseldine on Brisbane's north side. The principle purpose of our existence, as stated in our constitution, is promote, advance, cultivate and foster the game of Australian football. We currently operate and maintain two playing fields, our Clubhouse is situated at the same premises as our main playing field at Graham Road.

We currently employ 32 permanent staff, 5 apprentices, and 27 casuals. During the football season, we engage dozens of volunteers every week.

We have a total of 9,700 members; 500 of whom are 'full members' – associated with the Club so that they can participate in junior or senior football. Our remaining 9,000+ members visit the Club for a range of services and facilities. Apart from gaming, these mainly include socialisation, dining and entertainment. Our gaming facilities include 98 gaming machines, TAB and Keno.

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 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 of 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.



MAJOR SPONSOR



In the last financial year, we returned a total of \$472,133 in cash and in-kind support. This went towards subsidised registration fees, maintenance of two playing fields, provision of players' uniforms and apparel, free use of Club facilities by other not for profit community groups, donations to young sports people to assist with travel expenses to participate in representative sports, attaining coaching accreditations, and volunteer staff assisting with coaching and managing junior teams. These and other projects we 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 members and the local community without the much needed services and facilities that are made possible by 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 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 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 advances open many possibilities for harm minimization, it is critical that any technology is evaluated first and then, based on 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. modeling 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 acknowledgement of the extensive responsible gambling measures that are already in place. Some attention should also be given to the concept of personal responsibility as there is a limit to which controls can be placed on gaming 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.

Yours sincerely

A rectangular box with a thin black border, used to redact the signature of Tom Streater.

Tom Streater
General Manager