

INNISFAIL RSL

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

Dear Sir

Re: Club Response to Draft Report on Gambling

I have been asked by 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 in Innisfail, North Queensland. The principal purpose of our existence, as stated in our Constitution

- 1.5.1 To assist and care for the sick, elderly and needy of those who served and their dependants by providing, or assisting to provide pensions, benefits, accommodation, medical treatment, rehabilitation and other forms of welfare;
- 1.5.2 To establish and accept trusts having for their object the welfare and benefit of any member of the League, its Branches, or Sub Branches, or of any member, or ex-member, of the Australian Defence Force, or their dependants; and
- 1.5.3 In furtherance of any of the objects of the League, to make grants to and give assistance to such persons, trusts, groups, associations, societies, institutions or other organisations and authorities and to establish such scholarships as the League may, from time to time determine.

We currently own our licensed club situated overlooking the Johnstone River.

We currently employ 14 casual and 2 full-time employees. In addition the kitchen is leased to and outside party who employ 9 casual kitchen attendants, 1 full-time stewardess, 1 full-time 3rd year apprentice chef, 1 full-time 1st year apprentice chef and 1 full-time qualified chef. Further assistance is gained from 22 volunteers on a weekly basis.

We have a total of 2400 members which encompasses 198 service personnel and 37 war widows. Our 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 50 poker machines and a Keno outlet.

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. 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.

In the last financial year, we returned a total of \$51494 in cash and in-kind support. This went toward a range of projects, including assistance to our local Air Cadets 107 Squadron, Opti-minds teams at local High Schools, the local Light Horse Troop, Veterans and local school fundraisers and countless hours of volunteer service holding ceremonial functions educating our local community.

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 with the much need service 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 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, no 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 services 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 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 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 the 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 Donna Law.

Donna Law
Secretary/Manager