



## Tuncurry Bowling Club

*A Division of St Johns Park Bowling Club Ltd*

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

Dear Commission Representatives,

I would like to make comment on the Draft Report released in October and point out the glaring inconsistencies in regards to the recommendations contained.

The bulk of the report appears to have many and varied recommendations to restrict the use and appeal of poker machines in an attempt to reduce the incidence of problem gambling, but recommends the liberalisation of internet gambling. This is not only contradictory but is irresponsible.

Poker machines have existed in NSW for around 60 years and the fact is that people have to make a conscious decision to go to a casino, hotel or registered club in order to gamble on poker machines. In this environment they have the opportunity to speak to staff if they feel they have a gambling problem and they can get virtually immediate help. They can opt for self-exclusion from that and any other venue and at the time are also given contacts for gambling counselling which in most cases allows for arrangements to be made for face to face counselling if needed. Hotels and clubs in NSW are not allowed to advertise poker machines in any way whatsoever outside the venue.

Internet gambling, on the other hand, is being marketed in prime time during sporting events and, as I found the other day, is being marketed to internet users with no obvious "opt out" scheme for those that do not wish to be subjected to this advertising. At home I use Dodo as my Internet Service Provider, as do my young children, and regularly check my usage limits in the members section. Imagine my surprise last Sunday to see that I now am now being marketed to and informed that I can "Bet 24/7" and view the latest racing and sports odds from this company. (This can be confirmed at this internet address <http://www.dodo.com.au/members/index.aspx>) Clicking on the "Start Betting, Click Here" logo takes you to their website which informs you that you "can start betting within two minutes", and I assume that this includes using a credit card, something that all other forms of betting in NSW does not allow. Surely this will be more of a concern moving to the future in regards to problem gambling than poker machines.

As to the consequences of the recommendations in the Draft Report in regards to poker machines, almost any of them, even in isolation, would mean the decimation of the club industry. Clubs are such a major part of so many communities, particularly in regional areas, that the closing of them would mean untold harm to the community. Untold numbers would lose their jobs, not just in the clubs themselves but in the industries that supply and support them. Sporting and community groups would miss out on vital funding and entertainment options for all ages would disappear.

As Secretary Manager of Tuncurry Bowling Club on the Mid North Coast of NSW I can state with a degree of certainty that were the recommendations to be adopted our club would almost certainly close its doors within a relatively short time. We are a part of St Johns Park Bowling Club in Sydney and until recently the only reason that the doors were still open, and the facilities modern and comfortable, was due to the flow of financial support from St Johns Park to Tuncurry. A relatively small percentage of our income is derived from poker machines however without the support of St Johns Park, which derives quite a high proportion of their income from gaming, the facilities up here would no longer exist.

Since my appointment here we have managed to turn the club around to the point of being profitable, the loss of between 10% and 30% of our gaming income, which is a very conservative estimate if some of the recommendations are adopted, would mean that we could not survive. The loss of a similar nature to St Johns Park Bowling Club would most likely mean that they would not be in a position to keep subsidising this club.

What would this mean to the community? To start it would mean the loss of three bowling greens, bingo three times a week, indoor bowls, a meeting place for the community and a place to dine and socialise for locals and tourists alike.

Tuncurry Bowling Club over the past 12 months has also supported local sporting groups, Alzheimer's Australia, Camp Quality Great Lakes, Can Teen Australia, Careflight (NSW) Ltd, Epilepsy Action Australia, Forster Surf Lifesaving, Forster Tuncurry Stroke Recovery Club, Great Lakes Meals on Wheels and the Victorian Bushfire Appeal to the tune of thousands of dollars. All of this would disappear. It would also mean the loss of the main entertainment facility in the region for 18-30 year olds on Saturday nights and for a broader age group the rest of the week. We provide a courtesy bus which for most of the year is utilised by those too frail to drive themselves as well as for those who wish to have a drink and get home safely.

A large proportion of the Great Lakes region consists of retirees. Without the local club many of these people would lose the main focal point of their lives. The club is their place to meet, have lunch or dinner, play a game of bowls or bingo and enjoy a drink in comfort and safety. Saying that they could go to the other clubs in the area fails to take into account the fact that, from my knowledge of the financial position of most clubs in the area,

the majority of them would also be forced to close their doors if the recommendations are adopted.

Thank you for taking the time to read this and if you wish to contact me I am available via any of the means below.

Yours Sincerely

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