

17 September 1999

Mr Gary Banks and Mr Robert Fitzgerald
Productivity Commissioners
Gambling Inquiry
Productivity Commission
PO Box 80
BELCONNEN ACT 2616

Submission of Recommendations

To Productivity Commission in response to the Draft Report into Australia's Gambling Industries

As a non-profit organisation dedicated to strengthening Australian families and assisting them in the many different challenges facing them today, I wanted to take this opportunity to present a number of recommendations for the Commission to consider.

Focus on the Family[®] Australia is affiliated with "family organisations" in 13 other countries. Focus on the Family in Colorado Springs, United States, is headed up by psychologist and best-selling author, Dr James Dobson, who for the last two years was on the National Gambling Impact Study Commission.

Today, here in Australia, we are witnessing increasing numbers of people who are either gambling recreationally and experience unmeasurable side effects related to the gambling, or those who are pathological, that is, for whatever reason they cannot control their urge to gamble despite often horrific consequences.

Problem and pathological gambling never effects just one individual or one family but has broader ramifications for society. Such costs include unemployment, increased need for welfare, physical and mental health problems, theft, embezzlement, bankruptcy, suicide, domestic violence, child abuse and neglect.

I would like to draw your attention to some of the specific recommendations made by the National Gambling Impact Study Commission, which in many cases should be applicable to the Australian setting. These include the following:

- ATM's and credit machines should be removed from gambling areas;
- Internet gambling should be banned and how would children's access to Internet gambling be monitored. It is especially enticing to youth, pathological gamblers and criminals.
- Before a state or community can explain gambling, it should be required to fund a comprehensive gambling Impact Statement to assess the true costs of doing so.

- Warnings about the dangers of gambling, as well as the odds, should be posted prominently in every gambling establishment.
- Penalties and enforcement efforts regarding under-age gambling should be maintained. Each gambling facility must employ procedures to allow gambling adults to voluntarily ban themselves from entering in such facilities and political contributions from gambling companies should be restricted

I congratulate the Federal Government for taking the initiative in asking the Productivity Commission to assess Australia's Gambling Industries and look forward to reading an unbiased and objective report about the impact of gambling on Australian society.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Glenn Williams", with a large, sweeping flourish underneath.

GLENN WILLIAMS
Executive Director