

QUEENSLAND
RESPONSIBLE GAMBLING ADVISORY COMMITTEE

**Submission to the
Public Inquiry into Australia's Gambling Industries**

As invited by John Williams, Gambling Inquiry Director, the following submission provides details on the nature and role of the Queensland Responsible Gambling Advisory Committee.

Background

In 1993 the Queensland Department of Families, Youth and Community Care initiated a three (3) year research program into the social and economic impacts of the introduction of gaming machines into Queensland clubs and hotels. The first year report was released in 1995 and recommended the establishment of a steering committee on problem gambling to develop proactive strategies and to facilitate a formal meeting point between government, industry and Break Even services. The need for such a committee was also identified and promoted by the Queensland Break Even Network.

Problem Gambling Advisory Committee

The Problem Gambling Advisory Committee was established in August 1996 with the aim of providing a government, industry and community forum to monitor the impact of problem gambling in Queensland. The Advisory Committee, chaired by the Director-General of the Department of Families, Youth and Community Care, was empowered to provide advice to appropriate decision-makers on strategies to monitor, prevent and effectively respond to problem gambling.

Key organisations from the community, industry and government were invited to nominate members. Current members include the Break Even Network, Gamblers Anonymous, Jupiters/Conrad Casino, Queensland Council of Social Services, Queensland Office of Gaming Regulation, the Queensland Hotels Association, Clubs Queensland, TAB, Golden Casket Lottery Corporation and the Department of Families, Youth and Community Care. A list of current members is provided in Attachment 1.

Independent Secretariat

The Independent Secretariat, funded by the Department of Families, Youth and Community Care, was established to progress initiatives of the Advisory Committee. The Independent Secretariat is staffed by an executive officer (appointed in February 1998), an administration officer (part-time), and a temporary project officer. The Secretariat is instrumental in supporting the Advisory Committee to achieve a coordinated and comprehensive approach in addressing and responding to gambling-related issues.

Focus on Responsible Gambling

The Advisory Committee is currently engaged in developing a five (5) year strategic plan which is underpinned by the following vision:

Community groups, industry and government working together to achieve responsible approaches to gambling.

The vision reflects the collaborative nature and proactive approaches of the Advisory Committee. Responsible approaches to gambling include service provision for those adversely affected by gambling, as well as harm minimisation strategies. In recognition of the focus on responsible gambling, it was agreed to change the name of the Problem Gambling Advisory Committee to the Responsible Gambling Advisory Committee.

The Strategic Plan will provide a clear statement of the Advisory Committee's vision and strategies to implement responsible gambling approaches in Queensland. Drawing on industry expertise, research, government agencies, and community groups, the Advisory Committee will make expert recommendations to key decision-makers on responsible gambling initiatives. The strategic planning process has provided an opportunity for each member to clarify their understandings of their roles and responsibilities on the Advisory Committee. Members' willingness to promote initiatives, such as the Gambling Help-Line, through their organisational channels has been instrumental in the success of projects undertaken by the Advisory Committee.

The Responsible Gambling Advisory Committee has identified five key result areas where change is needed to achieve the vision:

1. Community awareness of responsible gambling;
2. Service provision for those affected by excessive gambling;
3. Collaboration of community, government and industry;
4. Adoption of policy advice; and
5. Research collection and analysis.

The Strategic Plan will be reviewed annually to ensure it reflects current focus and incorporates emerging issues relevant to the Queensland context. The Strategic Plan will be supported by a Business Plan which will detail the specific initiatives identified to achieve the objectives and strategies in the Strategic Plan. It is anticipated that the Strategic Plan and Business Plan will be considered for endorsement at the next meeting of the Responsible Gambling Advisory Committee.

Models of operation

The Advisory Committee has been operating as an advisory committee to the Director-General for the Department of Families, Youth and Community Care. As part of the strategic planning process the Advisory Committee has considered a range of operating models. The preferred model of operation is for the Advisory Committee to be established as a ministerial advisory committee with direct responsibility to the Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care with broad terms of reference across a range of relevant portfolios. This approach would recognise that the focus of the Advisory Committee is on both social and economic impacts of gambling which, dependent on current projects, extends across a range of portfolios. The key role of Treasury is reflected in the Queensland Office of Gaming Regulation being represented on the Advisory Committee.

A partnership approach underpins the operation of the Responsible Gambling Advisory Committee with a focus on developing long-term strategic relationships between key stakeholders to achieve best practice. The widespread support of the Gambling Help-Line can be directly attributed to the relationships between the community, industry and government sectors which are built on trust and open communication with a commitment to common goals and an understanding of each other's expectations and goals.

In relation to future directions, the Advisory Committee is exploring the benefits of setting up a formal partnership agreement between the members of the Advisory Committee. Community groups, industry and government would work together in equal partnership through a formal agreement endorsed by the member organisations.

Gambling Help-Line

The Department of Families, Youth and Community Care has provided recurrent funding for a gambling help-line. The Responsible Gambling Advisory Committee is currently supporting the Department of Families, Youth and Community Care in conducting a six month pilot in three locations—Rockhampton, Cairns and Mt Isa.

The model for the Queensland Gambling Help-Line service was developed by the Advisory Committee through a range of processes, including system requirement analysis and decision modeling, with a particular focus on determining measures of success. The Advisory Committee will consider the evaluation being conducted by the Department of Families, Youth and Community Care and other data collected during the pilot to make recommendations regarding statewide implementation of the service in 1999.

The support of the Advisory Committee has facilitated significant levels of cooperation, at local and state levels, between the community, government and industry sectors. For example, the support provided by peak industry bodies represented on the Advisory Committee has been instrumental in achieving the commitment of all gambling venues in the pilot areas, with signs and information cards prominently displayed in the Reef Hotel Casino in Cairns and all clubs, hotels TABs and lottery ticket outlets.

The Addiction Research Institute is providing gambling help-line services to a number of states and has congratulated Queensland on the promotional campaign which has resulted in the highest number of calls in the month following a launch.

In recognition of the importance of local contextual knowledge, the Advisory Committee has established Local Consultative Committees in each of the pilot areas, with membership from the industry, state and community sectors. The Committees are monitoring and providing advice on all aspects of the Gambling Help-Line and undertaking key local activities such as, contributing to local media coverage and other promotion of the Gambling Help-Line.

The Advisory Committee is currently developing a promotional campaign focussing on the family and friends adversely affected by gambling. Signs and information cards are being developed for installation in the amenities of cinemas and shopping centres and for distribution to libraries, police stations, community health centres, community centres and medical centres/doctor surgeries in the pilot areas.

An Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Task Group has been established, with membership from the Local Consultative Committees, to develop a culturally appropriate promotional campaign for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The Task Group will also provide advice to the evaluator of the Gambling Help-Line on alternate strategies to address gambling-related problems for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Discussions have begun with Multicultural Affairs Queensland and ethnic community groups in relation to developing promotion that is culturally appropriate to particular groups in the target areas.

In summary, the Responsible Gambling Advisory Committee has significantly contributed to the Gambling Help-Line Pilot Project by generating widespread support and commitment to the project at both the local and state level. All promotional material has been developed in consultation with key stakeholders and all participants are empowered to provide direct input through the Local Consultative Committees or through the Responsible Gambling Advisory Committee.

Community Awareness

As evident in the Gambling Help-Line promotional campaign, the Responsible Gambling Advisory Committee is committed to raising community awareness of the nature and extent of gambling-related issues. The statewide focus of the Responsible Gambling Advisory Committee on community education complements the comprehensive work carried out by the Break Even services, often in conjunction with the industry sector, at the local level.

Responsible Gambling Statement

Key stakeholders in the gaming and wagering industry in Queensland have made a commitment to cooperatively develop a *Responsible Gambling Statement* to promote best practice principles. These stakeholders include excessive gamblers and their families, gambling and wagering operators, government, service providers and community groups. A key benefit of collaboratively developing the *Responsible Gambling Statement* will be the shared ownership and commitment of the signatories to ensuring the success of the implementation of the guidelines.

Curriculum Initiatives

The Responsible Gambling Advisory Committee recognises that, in the long term, prevention and early intervention strategies are essential to effectively address gambling-related problems.

The Independent Secretariat is currently working in partnership with the Office of the Queensland School Curriculum Council to develop modules dealing with issues related to gambling that will be included in the *Years 1-10 Health and Physical Education Sourcebook* which will be implemented in all schools in 1999. The modules, *Gambling with Health: building communication skills* (for 12-13 year old students) and *Gambling: minimising risk* (for 14 -15 year old students), are at the forefront of curriculum theory and embrace a holistic approach to addressing gambling-related issues. Members of the Advisory Committee and officers of the Council have been engaged in critical comment throughout the development of the modules. An extensive consultation is also being undertaken with key education stakeholders including unions (state and non-state), professional associations, parent associations and each education system to address any concerns or issues.

It is anticipated that modules, promoting responsible gambling with young people, will also be developed for inclusion in the *Studies of Society and Environment Sourcebook* which is currently being developed by the Queensland School Curriculum Council. In recognition that research suggests that gambling behaviours develop frequently as early as ten years of age, modules will be developed for primary school students. Learning experiences will include a focus on students' understanding of the ways in which advertising influences personal consumer habits and identity, as well as developing students' skills of managing resources.

In the post-compulsory sector the Board of Senior Secondary School Studies has invited the Responsible Gambling Advisory Committee to provide input into relevant subjects including Home Economics, Hospitality Studies and Health. A *National training resource package for training the hospitality industry in the provision of responsible gambling services* is currently being developed and the Responsible Gambling Advisory Committee will ensure there is complementarity between the package and material developed for relevant Board syllabuses.

The Responsible Gambling Advisory Committee is developing Gambling Education Guidelines which will articulate general principles for the education of students about gambling-related issues during the compulsory years of schooling.

Internet site

One of the future projects of the Responsible Gambling Advisory Committee is the establishment of an Internet Site which would have a range of purposes including promoting the work of the Advisory Committee, encouraging community knowledge and access and providing appropriate on-line resources to support the curriculum modules.

The Internet Site will be an integral component of the curriculum modules as teachers will be accessing the modules on-line. The Advisory Committee site will have hyper-text links to the sourcebooks providing supporting information for students, teachers, parents and others. Technologies afforded by the Internet Site will particularly be used to promote community knowledge and access in rural and isolated locations.

Conclusion

The Responsible Gambling Advisory Committee is strongly committed to minimising the adverse effects of excessive gambling on gamblers and their families, friends and work associates. The high levels of collaboration and cooperation between the industry, government and community sectors on the Responsible Gambling Advisory Committee has resulted in Queensland being well positioned to provide a cohesive and coordinated approach to preventing and responding to issues related to excessive gambling.

RESPONSIBLE GAMBLING ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP LIST	
CHAIR Ken Smith Director-General Department of Families, Youth and Community Care	Sharyn Casey Manager Community Funding and Support Branch Department of Families, Youth and Community Care
Ian Macdonald Executive Director Relationships Australia (Break Even Network representative, South East Queensland)	Tony McDermott Director, Centacare Catholic Family Services (Break Even Network representative, rural non-South East Queensland)
Representative Gamblers Anonymous	Grant Bowie Vice-President and General Manager Conrad/Jupitors Casino
Anthea Derrington Director Queensland Office of Gaming Regulation	Colleen Kelly Queensland Council of Social Services
Jim Stewart President Queensland Hotels Association	Penny Wilson Executive Officer Registered and Licensed Clubs Association of Queensland
Bruce Houston Executive Manager Media, Government and Customer Relations TAB	Sheree Jardine Public Relations Manager Golden Casket Lottery Corp
Expert Adviser Jim Wauchope Director Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy and Development	Executive Officer Lorraine Dinsey Independent Secretariat Responsible Gambling Advisory Committee