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Written Submission To The Productivity Commission Inquiry Into Australia's
Gambling Industries

From: Mr Peter Keep
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On behalf of: Warrandyte Community Church

Dear Commissioners,

I write as Pastor of the Warrandyte Community Church to speak against the proliferation of accessible gambling venues in Victoria generally and in the City of Manningham generally.

Much of the debate around gambling venues seems to centre on economics.

As a Church we believe that it is important that consideration be given to the moral issues pertaining to gambling:

1. We question the morality of basing economic success on taking money from people for nothing. The economy of our society needs to be based on productivity - ie goods or services provided for which one pays. Gambling does not fit this category, unless one considers it entertainment - a view popularised in Victoria. We believe that it is morally wrong to take money for nothing at best and the creation of a problem at worst.
2. We question the morality of providing an "entertainment" which is patently addictive and damaging to families. In my profession I have dealt with in the last two years a number of people who have become addicted to poker machine gambling. They went into a venue seeking some fun and some winnings only to emerge months later depressed, distraught, disillusioned and in debt. In some cases their losses amounted to tens of thousands of dollars. In one case it almost destroyed the family financially and in another almost destroyed the family. The secrecy surrounding the addiction and the mistrust that discovery caused very nearly led to the marriage breaking down.
3. We further question the morality of having ATM and Credit Card facilities in gambling venues. This would seem to target those who can ill afford it and entice them to increase their personal debt level. This is already a problem in Australia, without adding to it further.
4. We call into question the morality of marketing associated with gambling venues:
 - a. There is much angst in society about curing other addictions such as smoking. Celebrities are recruited to enhance the public reputation of being a non-smoker. Yet the same people are recruited to advertise Casinos

as the place where all the stars go and the place to be. It seems to us that we are being duped into swapping our addictions.

b. The theme in Victoria - "wouldn't you rather be at George's with your friends" promotes gaming venues as happy places of convivial company and fellowship. One only has to view one of these to see that nothing could be further from the truth. Perhaps all gambling ads should carry a warning. "Gambling is a wealth hazard".

5. We call into question the morality of projecting gambling as a get-rich-quick scheme. What is needed in society is a good solid basis of productivity. We all need to be producers. Gambling promotes a lazy attitude that we can ill afford as a society.

We respectfully submit these views and wish you well in your inquiry.

Yours faithfully

Peter N. Keep
(Pastor.)