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## GAMBLING INQUIRY PRODUCTIVITY SUBMISSION

The growth of gambling has inevitably been accompanied by an increase in the number of people presenting themselves to counselling services for gambling problems. Interstate reports claim that problem gamblers stated a range of reasons for seeking counselling for their problem. The largest number reported serious financial difficulties, followed by uncontrollable gambling behaviour, problems at work, interpersonal and family conflict, legal problems and physical symptoms. (Peter Westmore). Boredom also rates high especially for women. e.g. An article by Peter Morgan in Advertiser (SA) 18.1.97 stated that an Adelaide Central Mission claim 3 months ago, that gambling led to 50 South Australians killing themselves each year. Another article in the Advertiser 17.4.97 reported Mrs Helen Carrig of Relationships Australia's 'Break Even Programme' stated, "In 30 years in counselling I have never worked with a group of clients who are filled with such self-loathing and shame and the level of despair is dreadful - some people will steal from their children's money-box." Also according to Mrs Carrig, gambling caused immeasurable human misery, relationships break down, child deprivation and had negatively impacted on 'every business' in South Australia.

Mr Tipping, founder of Pokies Anonymous (Advertiser 17.1.97) said that 75% of people seeking help were women and sited the case of a 71 year old widow and mother of 5 who told how she had wasted tens of thousands of dollars on pokies.

There have been reports of Criminal cases involving fraud which have been connected with gambling losses.

There are about 9000 problem gamblers in South Australia. Reports indicate that 6% of South Australians play gaming machines at least once a week and account for 56% of total gambling expenditure. Approximately 55% are male and 45% female and their average expenditure (losses) were \$220 a month or \$2500 annually. A third had household incomes of less than \$20,000 a year. More than half had household incomes of less than \$30,000 a year.

A significant proportion of frequent players come from low income groups for whom even a moderate amount of gaming expenditure might put households at increased risk of financial and family breakdown. (From report "Impact of gambling on family Support).

### THE GROWTH OF GAMBLING ----(IMPACT OF GAMBLING ON FAMILY SUPPORT).

The Advertiser newspaper on 1.5.98 (pages 1&4) reported that " Australian gamblers are expected to outlay more than \$100 billion dollars a year by the turn of the century." The latest official statistics record that losses on T A B and bookmaker betting, poker machines, lotteries and other gambling add up to \$737 a year for every Australia over 18 years.

Every Australian adult lost an average of \$363 on Poker Machines, \$144 in the Casino, \$123 at the racecourse and \$ 64 on Lotto and Lottery tickets. Instant 'scratch'

lotteries attracted an extra \$16 per person while \$27 was spent on miscellaneous betting.

It has been estimated by the Adelaide Central Mission that about 22,000 or 1.5% of the population in S.A. will develop an addiction to poker machines and up to another 220,000 individuals will suffer as a result. Every month, Sth Australians on average put about \$260 million into 10,500 poker machines around the State, of which about \$225 million is returned in winnings.

#### EFFECTS OF POKER MACHINES ON THE FAMILY.

This has been identified as a major issue for concern, creating ongoing financial difficulties, domestic violence and child neglect. (Media release Senator Jeannie Ferris - Jan. 1998.

#### ACI SECTION 6. BENEFITS AND COST TO INDIVIDUALS.

Many advertisements promoting gambling are misleading in as much as they portray the 'winners'; and not the 'losers'. e.g. Adelaide Casino promotional campaign boasts, "HIGHEST PAYS IN TOWN" AND " UP TO 98% PAY OUT RATE", but refuses to disclose which machines pay out at this rate. (NO POKIES UPDATE June 1998).

People fail to fully understand the odds. Problem families sometimes develop health problems such as depression, no self worth, leading to family break downs. Loss of employment/business. Criminal activities.

E.G. STEVE (not true identity), family breakdown leading to divorce, loss of business and home, leading to embezzlement. (mainly Casino gambling).

LYDIA. A compulsive gambler. A loving wife and mother.

In order to have her 'fling' Lydia needed money, first it was the house keeping allowance, that vanished, then her private savings, then larger and larger withdrawals from savings and investments held jointly with her husband.

Feeling she would recoup all her losses, Lydia made one last fateful throw of the dice. Soon the family were out on the street. House, furnishing and car had gone. Next came divorce and litigation. Then an investigating fraud squad, (Lydia had forged her husband's name in order to cash some bonds), when a friend offered her support, Lydia asked "If gambling can land you in this kind of quick sand then why are governments multiplying casinos and lotteries." WAR CRY Salvation Army. 11.10.97.

Report 'GAMBLING LINKED TO CRIME". (Advertiser 12.8.98).

University of South Australia research has revealed a strong link between compulsive gambling and criminal activity. A study of 103 new inmates at Adelaides' Yatala Labour Prison showed '33% could be classified as pathological gamblers - those who had stolen to help fund their habit'.

#### BENEFITS AND COSTS FOR LOCAL COMMUNITIES.

##### COSTS:

Poverty, leading to lower standard of living, causes distrust and dishonesty within families, creates more difficulties for charities, less money from fund raising, and creates greater demand on their resources.

When opposing an application by the NUNDROO HOTEL MOTOR INN, 150 km from CEDUNA, LEADING Aboriginal Spokesman DR ARCHIBALD BARTON told a Liquor and Gaming Commission hearing, "That poker machines would draw money away from 200 Aborigines who lived at Oak Valley. Five or six carloads of Aborigines

travelled to NUNDROO every week to drink alcohol, but the situation would worsen if pokies were installed. Residents would lose their money and become involved in arguments and violence." He also stated "We have to put a lid on it as it effects families - kids will suffer."

Over the past four years in South Australia, as a result of poker machines "10,000 jobs have been lost in retail and 61% of businesses reported sales are down according to MR MAX BALDOCK, President of the Small Retailers association.(Sunday Mail 26.7.98)

Other reports attribute the closure of businesses to poker machines.

It appears at present that poker machines are the greatest form of addiction for gamblers. MR PEITER REMMER, European gambling authority during his visit to Adelaide in November 1997, said "that South Australia still had to face the full social impact of the pokies". He also said " Holland was considering legislation to decrease the spread of pokies, to allow 15 seconds 'cooling off' after a jackpot and reduce machines bells and whistles.

**ALL THESE ARE FEATURES OF GAMBLING TECHNOLOGY WHICH ARE DESIGNED SPECIFICALLY TO ENCOURAGE HIGH LEVELS OF GAMBLING.**

**POKIES:** Layout of venues for poker machines are drawn up with the help of psychologists to eliminate outside light and distractions - people are mesmerised by lights and noise of machines.

#### **INTERNET GAMBLING**

An International Conference on gambling held recently at Glenelg, Sth Australia, was told that Internet Gambling, available for 24 hours a day, would allow gamblers to 'walk through virtual reality casinos on home computers and bet on anything from poker to roulette machines. This will allow minors to gamble as long as they have access to their parents identification numbers.

Another problem has been the introduction, "some states of Gambling Parlours, where gamblers can withdraw cash direct from their bank account at a cashiers' booth and Smart Cards called Tabaret Cards may also be used."

In these mini casinos while parents are gambling the hours away, children are kept amused in an activity room which has an adventure playground and a row of coin operated video games. It would be easy for children to progress from these to poker machines.

Our Organisation believes that instead of increasing outlets for gambling,

**THAT OVER A PERIOD OF YEARS, POKER MACHINES SHOULD BE PHASED OUT.**

**THAT INTERNET GAMBLING MUST BE STOPPED AND NO APPLICATIONS GRANTED FOR FURTHER GAMBLING PARLOURS, and there is a need to- ELIMINATE T A B PHONE BET CARDS etc.**

(Mrs) Dawn Giddings, State Corresponding Secretary WCTU of Sth. Australia.