

"FOR GOD, HOME and
HUMANITY"

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(03)
Telephone 9322 1648



The Woman's Christian Temperance Union

of Western Australia, Incorporated.

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Headquarters : 17/4 Ventnor Avenue, WEST PERTH 6005

SUBMISSION TO THE PRODUCTIVITY COMMISSION ON THE EFFECTS OF GAMBLING IN THE COMMUNITY

We, the members of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union, are deeply concerned over the effects of gambling in the community, and that so many are being caught up in this addictive practice with resultant burdens on welfare providers.

This alluring "get rich quickly" hope so often ends in failure, distress and brokenness, affecting not only those involved but the whole family. There are so many avenues of gambling being promoted continually that it is so easy for young and old to think that it is a sure way of making money, when actually, for the majority, it is a sure way of losing and wasting money.

Gambling is now a very large industry but it is an unproductive industry. It simply transfers large sums of money to the very few which is supplied by a vast number of people who often cannot afford to lose it. It causes robbery, embezzlement, bankruptcy, broken homes, suicide and results in greater burdens on government and other welfare agencies.

Gambling in its many forms is fast becoming one of Australia's trouble spots which is not helping our children and young people. If they had the example, the encouragement and opportunity to earn and deserve what they receive, it would do much more for them than the continual bombardment of winning something. The honest work ethic is being eroded by the false hopes portrayed in the promotion of gambling.

Below are some facts gleaned from various sources over the last few years:

WA GAMBLING BUG BITES (Canberra - By Alan Thornhill) THE WEST AUSTRALIAN
10/7/97 -

"West Australians are gambling more heavily than they did in the 80s.

"A new study shows that a typical WA family now bets slightly more than 2.5 per cent of their weekly budget on the races, trots, in the casino, on lottery tickets, raffles or other kinds of gambling. That is about \$17.70 a week.

"This compares with just one per cent of family income in 1983-84.

"Even so, the State's gambling habits are still relatively moderate by national standards.

"Australian families, on average, gamble more than 3 per cent of their average family budget - about \$22.42 a week.

"The bite that betting takes out of the average Australian family's budget is now almost twice as big as it was in the 80s.

"Victorians are among the most heavily addicted. Their gambling regularly swallows almost 3.5 per cent of the family budget, about \$24.20 a week.

"Prime Minister John Howard is worried by the trends and has ordered a major study on the impact that gambling is having on Australia's economic life.

"This follows reports that Victorians, in particular, are increasingly inclined to neglect their families to support their gambling habits.

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"The study by Access Economics relies heavily on statistics prepared by the Tasmanian Gaming Commission...

"The study contains several surprises. It shows that the poor, who probably cannot afford to do so, typically spend a much bigger part of their family budget on gambling than the rich.

"It also shows that the young and the old are Australia's biggest gamblers. Those aged between 15 and 24, for example, gamble much more than those aged between 25 and 44.

"But older people roughly match the young, mostly single group, in the share of their disposable incomes they devote to gambling....."

WA GAMBLING HITS RECORD (THE WEST AUSTRALIAN 22/2/95):

"Lotteries Commission spokesman Andrew Walton said the introduction of Oz Lotto last year had helped boost sales, as had a number of big wins which got wide publicity.

"In 1994, Lotto games made 20 West Australians instant millionaires.

"Mr Walton said Lotto's success was founded on the fact players could become overnight millionaires.

"'A Lotto ticket is almost a licence to dream and if you haven't bought one you haven't really got anything to hang your dreams on,' he said.

John O'Connor, an expert in gambling addictions and lecturer at the Curtin University school of psychology, said gambling had become Australia's second biggest industry by turnover behind the mining industry.

"The Tasmanian commission says the Australian gambling industry turned over \$48 billion in 1993-94.

"'What is interesting now is that because it is such a good source of revenue for governments, governments of the world are producing more and more gaming opportunities for their population,' Mr O'Connor said.

"'The more opportunities you have got the more likely you, as an individual, will find your particular gambling niche.'....

"Financial counsellors say ballooning popularity of gambling has a down side as families find themselves getting into financial difficulty through heavy gambling.

"'The more difficulties that arise, the more that gambling takes off,' said France Radford, a counsellor at Wesley Mission's Creditcare.

"'And it's not just the individual who is affected but the greater family seems to get involved one way or another.

"'They can have the house taken from them without even knowing about it.'"

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GAMBLING A WORRY: GROUP - By Roger Martin (THE WEST AUSTRALIAN 23/2/95):

"Up to 13,000 West Australians could be problem gamblers, according to a self-help group for addictive gamblers.

"Gamblers Anonymous said yesterday between 10 and 20 per cent of gamblers had gambling problems and these problem gamblers were responsible for nearly a third of all gambling revenue.

"The group called for a community levy on gambling, part of which could be used to finance counselling and rehabilitation programs for problem gamblers.

"Gamblers Anonymous said community levies were already applied in some States at a rate of 1c for each dollar of gambling revenue.....

"A study by the Tasmanian Gaming Commission, which monitors gambling around Australia, shows that for every adult in WA, \$512 was lost on gambling last financial year - \$414 on general gaming and \$98 by punters on the greyhounds, trots and horse races,

"Total gambling turnover in the State rose 23 per cent to \$2.8 billion in the same period.

"A lecturer in psychology and expert in gambling addictions, John O'Connor, said gamblers who lost big amounts often bet bigger in a bid to recoup their losses.

"'If you can afford to lose the money you are betting there are no problems, but if you can't afford to do that and you start chasing your losses, then disaster is just around the corner,' Mr O'Connor said. 'You start digging yourself into a deeper and deeper hole of debt. The more desperate you become, the more dependent you are on a big win to get out of it.'.....

THUMBS DOWN FOR POKIES (SUNDAY TIMES 18/2/96):

"The Office of Racing and Gaming this week stalled a thrust to introduce poker machines into WA pubs and clubs.

"The authorities' main objection stemmed from research showing the pokies increased problem gambling.....

Curtin University researcher John O'Connor this week warned that gambling had reached worrying levels.

"'Australians had a natural appetite for gambling and many were easily seduced by determination to win,' he said.

"Mr O'Connor, a psychology and addiction studies lecturer who has examined gambling for eight years, said his research showed about a third of regular punters were in danger of real trouble with gambling habits.

"He called for more information to be made readily available to potential gamblers and said advertising promoting the glamorous world of gambling often was misleading...

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"Geoff Jones, a clinical psychologist with counselling group Mainchance, said futuristic gambling could include punting on the Internet.

Mr Jones said there was evidence of some overseas groups beginning to introduce roulette and blackjack on the information superhighway."

CRUSADE TO SAVE THE LOST SOULS OF GAMBLING (SUNDAY TIMES 18/2/96) - By Lisa Pendrill:

....."Jocelyn is one of a growing number of Australians gripped by gambling. A flutter on the horses became a crusade to bet on anything that moved, leaving casino-regular Jocelyn hopelessly in debt. Some weeks she lives on frozen scraps because her addiction has eaten the grocery money.

"I've been to hell and back," she said this week. 'I'm trying to get over it but I'm not nearly cured.'

"Jocelyn has sold her car, television and furniture to finance the fixation that has cost her thousands over the past 13 years. Every day she hopes her number is not quite up - that she will strike it lucky and pay off the debts.

"Perth agencies to help WA's 5000-plus chronic gamblers and their families hear this tale over and over.....

"BreakEven sees punters who can resist everything but temptation and have lost their homes or thousands of dollars in one hit.

"It sees others on the brink of marital breakdown because family's lifestyle has flagged.

"Reformed addicts tell how out-of-control gambling opens up a world of secrecy, anxiety and lies.....

"BreakEven counsellor Graeme Burton said a stronger campaign was needed to continue to steer vulnerable gamblers from the perils of money loss.....

"Mr Burton said it was not uncommon for agencies to see people who had thrown away their life's work.

"I've had a lady in her 40s who started gambling and has now blown the entire family savings - around \$40,000,' he said.

"She said it filled a gap in her life, it was exciting, it was an outing, the casino felt safe and she became more and more involved until it was totally out of control.

"I had one guy who lost in excess of \$200,000 - he wasn't a rich man. He'd taken a large amount of inheritance to the casino and felt he was on a roll. He got up to \$200,000 but eventually lost the lot.

"People come in here in tears - they get to the stage where they have absolutely nothing to show. With other addictions like alcohol there is a lot to show - you get alcohol poisoning, your liver can collapse. But with gambling it is financial problems which some people don't understand

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or see initially.

"With every problem gambler there are seven to ten people affected.

"It gets to the stage when the win becomes irrelevant it's a case of chasing money to cover losses," he said."

WELFARE GROUP BACKS COURT ON POKIES - By Keryn Ashworth.

"A leading welfare group has backed Premier Court's opposition to a bid by the hotel industry to introduce electronic poker machines into WA.

"WA Council of Social Services executive director Shawn Boyle said the use of the machines in other States and Territories had led to an increase in gambling-related poverty, domestic violence and petty crime.

"Welfare agencies had so many clients that they were at a stage where a gambling levy was needed to fund the sector.

"Research had found that the availability of poker machines in local areas had led to breakdown of the social fabric within the community."

POKIE SPREE:

"South Australians are losing \$800,000 a day on pokies, pushing up gambling turnover by 40 per cent.

GAMBLING (THE WEST AUSTRALIAN 29/10/96):

"Gambling addiction has become the root of two-thirds of workplace fraud, plucking millions of dollars from firms, big and small."

HIDDEN PROBLEM WRECKS FAMILIES AND LIVES - By Catherine Fitzpatrick and Marnie McKimmie (THE WEST AUSTRALIAN 4/10/96):

"WA's hidden gambling problem breaks up families, drives people into crime to repay massive debts and spurs suicides, gambling support groups and counsellors said yesterday.

BreakEven counsellor Graeme Burton said in one extreme case a client had turned to robbing banks to get money for an \$80,000 gambling debt.

"Other clients regularly reported their habit was to blame for strains on relationships or their attempts to hide or falsify bank statements to deceive their partners.

"Gamblers Anonymous said many people whose self-esteem was shot to pieces by their gambling addiction took their own lives because they felt their families would be better off without them...

"The Salvation Army warned it had been experiencing an increase in families seeking emergency aid the week after a big Lotto or Powerball jackpot. In some cases their money had been spent on the jackpot draw."

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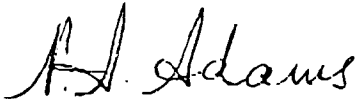
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CONCLUDING SUGGESTIONS:

In view of the previous facts and similar information gained in discussions with welfare providers and individuals, we submit the following suggestions:

1. That advertising of gambling and gambling results, which can be deceptive, be restricted on television general viewing time.
2. That gambling avenues be restricted, including that on Internet.
3. That a greater proportion of gambling revenue be designated for education of the public regarding the potential dangers of gambling, and the rehabilitation of problem gamblers. Assistance from these funds be given to support agencies and also to welfare providers.
4. Instruction regarding the dangers of gambling be included in the school curriculum.

We thank you for your consideration of this submission.



Nola A Adams (Mrs)
STATE SECRETARY