



# AMA

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A.bl/818

16 August 1999

Productivity Commission  
PO Box 80  
BELCONNEN ACT 2616

Dear Productivity Commission,

**Re: AMA submission on the *Draft Report on Australia's Gambling Industries***

The Australian Medical Association (AMA) congratulates the Productivity Commission's *Draft Report on Australia's Gambling Industries* as an excellent overview of the beneficial and detrimental impacts that gambling has on Australian society.

The *Draft Report's* critical assessment of the anecdotal and empirical evidence surrounding such issues as the association between problem gambling and accessibility and the association between problem gambling and psychological disorders is extremely comprehensive. It presents evidence related to problem gambling in a fair and seemingly unbiased manner, and bases its findings and recommendations on the critical analysis of that evidence.

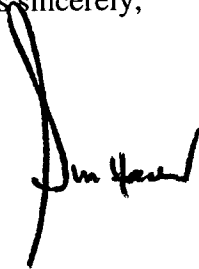
It would be beneficial, however, to place a greater emphasis on recognising that General Practitioners (GPs) are the first point of contact for problem gamblers and their family members. Patients may go to their GP to treat the adverse physical and psychological health effects associated with problem gambling. As outlined in the AMA's submission to the Productivity Commission's *Public Inquiry into Australia's Gambling Industries*, direct health effects include a broad range of physical and psychological symptoms associated with gambling-related anxiety and depression while indirect health effects may arise from inadequate nutrition, poor hygiene, and poor living conditions associated with gambling-related financial difficulties. Although GPs are briefly mentioned in Chapter 16 as 'other information and referral sources' (Figure 16.1), they do play a significant role in assessing problem gamblers and their family members and referring those individuals to appropriate counselling services.

The AMA has become increasingly concerned with the health effects associated with problem gambling in Australia. The AMA's Victorian and New South Wales branches, in particular, have been heavily involved in developing problem gambling information kits and awareness programs for GPs.

At last year's AMA National Conference (1998), a policy discussion group was held which examined the effects of gambling on health. A draft position statement was developed from the policy discussion group and this was forwarded to the AMA's Ethics and Public Health Committee (EPHC) for further development. In the near future, the AMA's Federal Council will consider the draft *AMA Position Statement on the Health Effects of Problem Gambling* for adoption. I will ensure that you receive a copy of this Position Statement when it is finalised.

Congratulations again on an excellent document. If you would like to discuss the AMA's submission on the *Draft Report*, please feel free to contact me on (03) 9510 6833. Alternatively, you may wish to contact Dr Kate Stockhausen at the AMA Federal Secretariat on (02) 6270 5400.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sandra Hacker', written over a large, stylized flourish that starts with a vertical line and loops back to the left.

Dr Sandra Hacker  
Vice President, AMA  
Chair, EPHC

ks

Enclosure

cc: Dr J Thomson  
Dr K Stockhausen  
Ms M Jovic