

19 October 2022

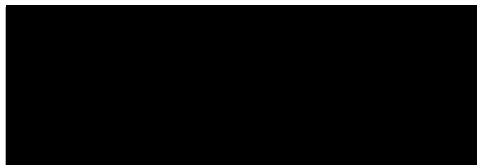
The Hon Peta Murphy MP  
Chair,  
Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs Inquiry into online gambling and its impact on those experiencing gambling harm,  
House of Representatives,  
PO Box 6021,  
Parliament House,  
Canberra ACT 2600.

Dear Ms Murphy,

I am attaching a submission, dated 19 October 2022, to the Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs Inquiry into online gambling and its impact on those experiencing gambling harm.

This submission is on behalf of nine women, whose details are set out in the submission.

Yours sincerely

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Carole Flood

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Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs Inquiry into online gambling and its impact on those experiencing gambling harm,  
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Dear Ms Murphy,

We write as concerned citizens about the alarming growth of gambling in Australia and are delighted that you and your parliamentary colleagues are inquiring into online gambling and its impact on those experiencing gambling harm.

It is our understanding that more than 700 advertisements are now placed weekly on nation-wide television by wagering companies. In the UK we understand the number of comparable advertisements to be less than 30 per week. The companies' reach into Australian households is disturbing.

Today's new wagering companies have examined Australians' gambling habits, have noted the weak regulatory framework and grasped opportunities to expand their businesses. They have assessed that generations of Australians have loved to gamble. They recognise that many Australians enjoy sport and that over a drink, or two, in their local pubs and clubs, they will place bets. One such company is Entain, (listed on the London Stock Exchange and one of the world's largest wagering companies). Its Danish-born CEO, Jette Nygaard-Anderson, describes Australia as an 'amazing market, we are extremely ambitious here'. Entain's gaming revenue last year was \$6.5 billion (The Australian, 30 September 2022)

Entain has clinched a sponsorship, promotional deal for its Ladbrokes and Neds digital betting brands in 1800 pubs and clubs across NSW. Hotel lounge facilities are to be emblazoned with Ladbrokes and Neds livery, replicating Entain's racetrack facility in Moonee Valley, Melbourne. Pub patrons are embracing this non-retail wagering via their mobiles, thus sidelining the traditional TabCorp, though Tabcorp itself has now launched an app for online betting.

Deeply troubling is how the wagering companies have assessed their ability to reach into households through sport. They have recognised that national sporting codes have enormous power due to devoted club followings, nation-wide interest and most importantly through television rights. Major codes – AFL, NRL, the Australian Tennis Open, Cricket Australia and the NBL - have signed up to 'integrity agreements' with companies such as Sportsbet. Ten cents of every dollar made by the companies goes to the codes.

Sportsbet's former CEO Matthew Tripp, negotiated a significant contract with the AFL, describing it (in exaggerated terms) as 'the engine beneath the might of the AFL': the imprimatur of the AFL has helped take the company from a market value of \$250,000 to approximately \$14 billion (The Age, 12 March 2022). And now, Sportsbet has introduced Multibet ...punters can wager in 25 different ways on who gets the first touch, who kicks the first goal, who serves the first ace... Tripp's new company BetR, was launched Australia-wide this week, ahead of the Melbourne racing season and Sydney's Everest Cup.

BetR, along with Entain and Sportsbet, are majority-owned by international interests – Irish, British, Canadian, American - and are insidiously gouging billions of dollars from Australia's economy via people's wallets. They cleverly focus on the love of sport in this country. A generation of young people is being targeted by slick TV advertising. And placing a bet is made all too easy by a simple click on a mobile phone.

It concerns us deeply that there is increasing dependence on sponsorship, promotional deals with on-line wagering companies. Furthermore, through a barrage of TV advertisements, young children are growing up today thinking that gambling is a normal part of sport. This is a tragedy.

We support the campaign led by the Reverend Tim Costello, in calling for the creation of a national regulator. Past attempts by politicians in state and federal governments have been unsuccessful in controlling the industry. Our hope is that you and your colleagues will take heed of the example set by Australia's first female Attorney-General Nicola Roxon. With courage and determination while Minister for Health, she stood up to the powerful tobacco lobby in 2012. In a program called 'Kicking the Habit', she succeeded in having all tobacco sold in plain packaging, accompanied by health warnings. She said 'governments have got a role to make sure they can help people in circumstances they can't control, for example in health...' It is confounding that gambling is the only public health issue that has no publicly funded independent body to research and mitigate the damage it causes. It is a major public policy issue because it affects the health and well-being of individuals and families nation-wide.

While we realise you are looking specifically at online gambling's impacts on those experiencing gambling harm, our hope is that your inquiry will lead to legislated controls to limit the industry's appalling parasitic grip on the community.

We are a group of citizens who meet regularly to discuss current affairs. And we wish you every success in leading and bringing about changes with your Inquiry.

Yours sincerely,

A solid black rectangular box redacting the signature of Carole Flood.

Carole Flood

on behalf of Margaret Bourke, Susan Chessell, Mary Constable, Elspeth Humphries, Beth Peedom, Jan Pryor, Jane Smyth, Marie Wood