

## SUBMISSION TO THE JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE ON GAMBLING REFORM

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To: The Joint Select Committee on Gambling Reform

To all concerned I pay appropriate respect even though unsure of how to address different members according to their position.

My name is Stephen Menadue and am writing this letter to give the Committee a brief outline of my multiple-decade addiction to gambling and in particular, the addiction I've had to poker machines.

I'm nearly 48 years old and have been addicted to gambling since I was about 15.

My gambling transcended from use to abuse then addiction very quickly. I've gambled with poker machines, horses, dogs, trots, sports, Keno, scratchies (a couple of hundred at a time) and in earlier years, in NSW the 20 cent card machines (draw poker) they used to and still do have. I've gambled in casinos, in my lounge room, 'round the corner and just down the road since poker machines became more geographically prolific.

I've gambled my food, friends, family, rent and, above all, my freedom. I have not only experienced every stage of a gambling addiction and lost nearly everything but have gone through these heartaches for 33 years of my life.

Most people learn after their first mistake or maybe after a couple of occasions; I had an insanity that would allow me to go and gamble even though my intelligent mind knew the probability of winning – low. The probability of very hard times and repercussions – high. Knowing these things, then with that same intelligent mind, justifying them out of existence (temporarily), and losing all my money was an act, that after a while not only caused me to ask why I was doing it, but why I was doing it knowing the bad outcome. This confusion only added to the grief of all the lies and consequences from those lies that I had to tell to my parents, family, friends, real-estate agents, drug dealers etc.

I've been a drug addict and also for a time struggled with alcohol. I will go into more detail about particular instances of psychological anomalies that happened to me in my representation in person to

the Committee. I believe the very least I can add to this Committee's objectives is to add the whole weight of everything negative about poker machines as a living testimony to all those negatives.

The one thing that has not happened is suicide. I don't have a spirit that will allow me to give in that way. Never.

I've wanted to do something about poker machines for a long time and had nearly given up on bothering to help anyone else in the same situation until I met someone who had very similar ideas. This meeting in late 2008 inspired me for the best part of 14 months to stay away from poker machines and gambling. This allowed me to grow a hatred towards poker machines and obviously kept me in a much better financial position. I became inspired to act in a positive legal way to help address this problem in society. Due to the death of my sister in November and other contributing factors including victimisation in the community I live in, I turned to gambling again to try and win something, I really rationalized that being so long away from it and now starting to lose continually, that I am due for a win. I am instituting changes in my life that have been progressive but life-changing and stopping gambling is one of them. I hid away, forgot my inspiration and actively started giving up again. This Committee's invitation to me to appear was a deeply moving honour for me. I've not felt very important in my life and I hope what I can give you will help in the objectives you have in mind. I also hope that I can define myself and my story and answer the questions posed to me in a lucid, factual, truthful way.

I am looking forward very much to being there in February and being part of this solution instead of part of this problem.

Thanking you most sincerely,

Stephen K. Menadue