

## **SUBMISSION TO THE SENATE INQUIRY INTO ADVERTISING AND PROMOTION OF GAMBLING SERVICES IN SPORT**

### **Introduction**

I thank the Senate for providing this opportunity for me to comment on this issue.

I am writing this submission from the perspective of a consumer and an avid sports watcher. Our family subscribes to FOXTEL and we watch a lot of sport on the various sports channels. I have a son who is fifteen years old and he is very interested in sports as well as participating in sport through school and local clubs.

I will make comment about each of the terms of reference of this inquiry, as follows:

#### **(a) in-ground and broadcast advertising;**

I object to electronic advertising of betting services and gambling on the scoreboards at sporting venues. It is a distraction and intrudes on our objective for attending the event- to watch the participants and to glance at the scoreboard to see instant replays or view facts and figures about the participants and the scores of each team.

The more often we are exposed to betting odds for sporting events, then we become de-sensitised to the concerns we have about betting and it becomes accepted as a normal part of the game and the sporting experience.

I think this constant exposure to odds of a team winning a game and the many other situations within a game, on which bets can be placed, is having an impact on our children, as it becomes a part of the game.

Broadcast advertising should be limited to making general statements about the company but not be allowed to advertise the odds of any particular event related to the sporting event.

#### **(b) the role of sponsorship alongside traditional forms of advertising;**

I have no objection to banners, billboards or sponsorship logos on team jumpers advertising a betting company.

#### **(c) in-game promotion and the integration of gambling into commentary and coverage;**

Watching sporting events or TV shows with a panel of “experts” discussing the game or listening to a radio broadcast for the commentary of an event, I have noticed that a number of times, the commentators mention the betting odds for events, which is

integrated in the normal conversation by the commentators. I assume a gambling company is paying/sponsoring that show or broadcast, but this is not directly revealed to the viewers or listeners.

I would like to see any advertising or discussion of betting banned from sporting events and from discussion within broadcasts unless it is clearly stated that the betting company is sponsoring the show and that definitive advertisements are presented, rather than the informal chatter within the broadcast by the commentators.

This style of advertising is very subtle and as previously stated, it “normalises” the inclusion and discussion of betting odds for certain events, which should not be the case.

Mr. Waterhouse in his advertisements is the “gamblers friend” and of course the negative effects of gambling are never mentioned or shown, nor is the hardship caused by excessive gambling and the impact on families.

**(d) exposure to, and influence on, children;**

I am concerned that if there are not strict controls on the advertising of gambling and gambling services as the cohort of my son’s generation will be more prone to problems with gambling. It is commonplace for boys of my son’s age (15 years old) to be discussing the odds of certain sporting events occurring. This is further compounded by the bombardment by advertisers of how easy it is to place a bet via their mobile phone app. Banning this will have negative effects and drive gambling underground, so we need strong regulation to control this advertising.

While adults may be aware of the consequences of problem gambling, children are not, they are influenced by the positive images provided of everyone is a winner when they place a bet!

**(e) contribution to the prevalence of problem gambling, and mechanisms to reduce that prevalence;**

This advertising and the integration of gambling into commentary and coverage of sporting events seeks to normalise gambling, which makes it more acceptable to indulge in gambling. The advertising focuses on winning and we only see smiling, happy people who have been successful.

Rather than a microscopic message at the bottom of the advertisement stating “*Don’t chase your losses. Walk away. Gamble responsibly.*” The warning needs to be more prominent or advertisers

should be forced to make a clear statement about how much profit they made as a result of people losing on the bets they placed.

Parents have a responsibility to educate their children and discuss this issue to ensure they realise the betting company is in business to make a profit for its shareholders and the odds are in the favour of the gambling group. This needs to be reinforced by tighter controls on advertising so as NOT to allow betting within sporting events become normal behaviour.

**(f) effect on the integrity of, and public attitudes to, sport;**

It is probably better to have government regulation and auditing mechanisms to try to control gambling, otherwise it will be easier for criminal elements to be involved and control gambling.

I believe that the link of sport and gambling may put some sports participants at risk of being influenced by criminals to alter their performance.

**(g) the importance of spot betting and its potential effect on the integrity of sporting codes;**

Spot betting has the potential for diminishing the integrity of sporting codes, as one single event/action by a participant could influence the result of the event and this participant could be influenced by people who want to influence the outcome of the event/action.

**(h) the effect of inducements to gamble as a form of promotion of gambling services, and their impact on problem gambling;**

I oppose any inducements being offered to encourage people to gamble. The inducement is designed to influence the person to gamble and influence their usual decision-making ability.

25<sup>th</sup> February 2013.