

# Senate Standing Committee on Economics

## ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Treasury Portfolio

Additional Estimates

23 – 24 February 2011

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AET 11

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Gambling reform and pre-commitment

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Written

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Professor Blaszczynski has also suggested that mandatory pre-commitment may actually delay some problem gamblers from seeking assistance or treatment. Rather than prolong the gambling experience, isn't the best solution for problem gamblers to stop gambling altogether and receive counselling?

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It is not clear how pre-commitment could undermine the goals of counselling and treatment.

Y Pre-commitment — including self-exclusion (its most extreme form) — may assist people who are already in treatment to manage the impacts of their gambling problems.

Y People who choose low limits during lucid periods, and manage to control the harm from excessive gambling, will nevertheless face periods where they have a strong desire to gamble (which is why they pre-commit to forestall the consequences of these periods). Given their impulses cannot be satisfied, this might trigger some to seek treatment. Others may not seek treatment because they are experiencing little harm anymore.

Y For those people for whom pre-commitment was not successful (problem gamblers only setting high limits), it is not clear that pre-commitment would have any effect on their uptake of counselling. Such gamblers would experience the full personal and financial consequences of problem gambling, and so the same factors that prompt some people to seek help currently would still be in place.

In addition, while counselling and treatment are desirable interventions (chapter 7), the evidence suggests that only a small proportion of people seek help and most clients have hit 'rock bottom' when they seek help, which is not a desirable approach in public health models.

It should be emphasised that pre-commitment is not a replacement of counselling. Any harm minimisation regime should encourage people to seek counselling. A pre-commitment system would actually entail a greater technological capacity to promote counselling through on-screen messages.

