

Senate Community Affairs Committee
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Friday 3rd October 2008

RE: ATMS and CASH FACILITIES IN LICENCED VENUES BILL 2008

Dear Committee Members,

Senator N. Xenophon recently made a speech to the Senate for the Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia. I am extremely concerned about the content of this speech and the proposed ATM and Cash facilities in licensed venues bill 2008. In my opinion it is obvious that Senator N. Xenophon is on a personal crusade to indoctrinate his narrow views via the power of the Australian Parliament.

Our family has been involved in the hotel and licensed premise business for nearly forty years. Our extended family through several generations is employed in the licensed hospitality industry and derives its income solely from these businesses. Our Hotel business venue's have ATM and multi cash facilities available. It is an imperative and almost necessity to have these facilities in an age where electronic fund transfer is the preferred and almost sole method of income being dispersed to normal working people. People require ATM's and Cash facilities to access their money to go about their daily life. This is an undisputed fact of how we now live. People require cash and access to cash to make frequent small value purchases such as those in a hotel. To deprive people access to their own funds is removing ones freedom of choice.

Senator N. Xenophon is proposing via this bill to eradicate the use of ATM's and cash facilities in licensed premises. The senators sole basis is centred on a vague estimate that 1.2% of the population being problem gamblers.

In the Senators second paragraph in his second reading he makes reference that any argument to pay for meals, drinks, accommodation and the like is fatuous. This is a comment made by an extremely ill informed individual that has no idea or respect into the workings, logistics and operations of a hotel and how the managerial process interacts with patron purchasing behaviour and patterns. This comment is one dimensional and not representative of how people make purchases in hotels and the like.

Put simply, in an environment where people make frequent, multiple and varying purchases of small value it is not feasible for a patron to pay electronically each and every time they wish to make a purchase. Most banks charge fees on their account holders based on the number of transactions they do in a given time frame. In our hotels, a patron recreationally attending the venue will make many small purchases. The nature of the pub industry requires the patron, as is the patrons overwhelming preference, to pay each and every time they make a purchase. If that patron were to pay for each purchase electronically individually, this would result in increased bank fees to that individual. This is a burden average hard working Australians do not need. Not every person has cash on them at all times. In this instance ATM's in licensed venues provide simplicity, convenience, commonsense and safety for all involved.

Our family Hotel business employs in excess of one hundred and fifteen people. In addition we engage the services of cleaning contractors, computer contractors and many other service providers. It would be fair to say that our organisation supports over one hundred families. In addition to this our hotels sponsor many local sporting, charity and neighbourhood organisations. The removal of ATM's and Cash facilities from licensed premises would severely impact our business. I would estimate a downturn in business by approximately forty percent. This would result in a reduction of staff and a reduction in our ability to support the local community. It will result in an increase in unemployment.

Senator N. Xenophon is basing his proposal on problem gamblers, which at best represents 1.2% of the population. In the Senator's speech it is clearly stated from the productivity Commission that only problem gamblers have issues with ATM's. You can not allow parliament to pass a bill that applies to such a minority. I thought Australia is a democracy, and I would contend that if 98.8% of the population were not affected the laws of democracy would allow common sense prevail.

Based on the Senator's reasoning, any person that suffers a compulsion should not be allowed to use ATM's or cash facilities at the point of purchase. Does this mean that food outlets can not dispense cash because of obesity epidemic!

If Senator N. Xenophon's bill is passed it will be government telling us how to live our lives. I do not want to live in a totalitarian state were I am told how, were and when I can spend my money. I would think the majority of Australians would have a similar view.

I ask that you closely look at what Senator N. Xenophon is proposing. I trust that you, as me and many others have realised that this proposal is absurd, ridiculous, ill thought out and has no regard for the impact or consequences on the 98.8% of the population that are not problem gamblers. This bill merely places a burden on those individuals that require the ease and convenience of ATM's and cash dispensing facilities at licensed venues. This bill has no regard for the jobs that will be lost in the hotel industry. This bill causes more problems and issues that will have greater negative impact on society than those they are trying to appease. This bill will result in more unemployment. This bill is anti democratic and is based solely on the views of one individual. This bill merely punishes those people that have control of their actions. This bill is discriminatory. This bill removes our basic rights and freedom of choice. This bill will inconvenience you and me when we attend a hotel. I trust you will inform your fellow parliamentarians to vote against this bill and allow common sense to prevail.

I would be more than happy to discuss the ramifications of this bill in more depth with you if required.