Gambling Impact Society (NSW) Inc.



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6th October 2008

Committee Secretary
Community Affairs Committee
Australian Senate
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Senator Humphery

ATMs and Cash Facilities in Licensed Venues Bill 2008

I do apologise for not having this on your desk on Friday 3rd as you directed but, due to my absence this past month, I am hoping that, as it is a long week-end, Tuesday 7th will not be too late for this further submission to be received

Our previous submissions to the Senate Affairs Committee as well as our evidence given at the Inquiry on September 12th, have clearly been in support of Senator Xenophon's Bill - to remove ATMs and Cash Facilities from licensed venues ie hotels/clubs.

To emphasise the need for this Bill to be passed and to add weight to the evidence of words only, I have faxed, to you, 'Judy's Story' which was placed in our letter box – unposted – addressed to 'Kate Roberts'. The latter has us deeply concerned. We have no way of tracing Judy to know if she is still alive. We and our members feel that if we cannot find her then the least we can do is to point her own compassion for those suffering a gambling addiction, like herself, towards the government that has allowed the ETM drug of 'Entertainment' (Ross Ferrar for Poker Machine Industry Sept 12th) burgeon in our society without having due respect for the lives of individuals – regardless of age, background, intelligence – and their families who are supported by Centrelink and welfare agencies. This was underlined by Mr Ross Ferrar (Sept12) when, following Senator Fielding's persistent questioning, he was unable to relate to any relative experience with person or persons whose lives had been affected by the impact of gambling.

This story is indicative of the stark reality of the impact of problem gambling on the individual, their families and on the community. To remove ATMs and Cash Facilities from Licensed Venues is, and has to be, a positive move towards minimising the potential harm to the people in our communities as outlined by Judy.

Gambling becomes a problem when the player of the ETM lapses into a feeling of numbress, or a trance-like state, and is oblivious to his/her surrounds. The attachment to the ETM becomes all consuming. ATMs within the player's venue, and only a few steps away from the ETM, will not interrupt this state of mind when approached and so will not prevent him

from withdrawing more and more cash. Whereas if the player has to terminate play through lack of money, an enforced walk into the real world, outside the venue, will be met with oxygen to clear the mind and restore rational thinking.

Again, for the same reasons, it is of particular importance to ban ATMs to protect workers at the venues. With relaxed surroundings and available food / refreshments for their off time breaks, the potential for harm is very real indeed.

Research has evidenced that the primary users of ATMs within licensed venues are those who gamble problematically (AC Nielson, 2006). Whilst the removal of ATMs from venues may be a minor inconvenience for some non-gambling patrons, the GIS maintains that there is substantial evidence to suggest that their removal would give significant effect to reducing problem gambling behaviour and so limit the direct impact on third parties being families, employers etc. We understand that the state of Victoria has already undertaken such measures and that the National Australia Bank has already removed all ATMs / cash facilities from gambling venues in NSW in appreciation of their significant contribution to problem gambling.

The problem gambling issue in Australia has become a National issue for the Commonwealth Government simply because the NSW State Government has a clear conflict of interests in relation to gambling policy when it relies so heavily on gambling revenue. An example is its policy on treatment for gambling whereby those afflicted are not accorded the same choice and level of professional medical care as that offered and given to those suffering with drug and/or alcohol addiction and smoking addiction. Because of this neglect the condition of depression, which is common to each one of the afore said, remains untreated along with the related conditions that would be clinically assessed in a qualified medical / mental health environment. As community health professionals we find this extremely disturbing as it not only discriminates one addiction from the other, but also it shows a disregard for the families affected by the impact of problem gambling. They also need treatment for depression and related conditions!

The removal of ATMs and cash facilities from venues would be a positive move towards alleviating and preventing community distressed health issues compounded by problem gambling. It is the Federal Government that is clearly in the best position to put in place a framework that incorporates public health ideals, consumer protection and social and corporate responsibility from which a strategic national approach can be developed. It is the Federal Government that is in a better position to address the public health issues (cost of gambling) .more objectively and to introduce measures to tackle them. (Marshall, 2004).

We simply cannot ignore Judy's story. Her key words are 'depression' and 'nothing has worked for me to stop'. We hope we find her.

Yours sincerely

Secretary for and on behalf of the Gambling Impact Society (NSW) Inc.

PS. Teether to my those early perturbay, I thank you for your katience. What

Judip Story

Dear Kate Roberts

Gembling Impact Society

The poker machines have got to be abandoned in Australia, for the benefit of the C/- 134 Kinghorne Australian people. Poker machines destroy lives, marriages, and children suffer as a consequence. There are already too many people in Australia that have been badly affected by poker machines and suffering from mental depression. Mentally and physically they are sick because of their addiction to the poker machine.

The way that the poker machines are designed is why a lot of people in Australia can get addicted at any age and while poker machines are in operation at the clubs in Australia a lot more people (of any age) will become addicted. The poker machines are designed to register only the winning in people's thoughts and minds.

I 'm addicted to poker machines and I have been addicted to them for 19 years. I have lost all my money that I have saved up. It started just by one day I went to the club to have lunch. I was sitting across the room from the poker machines and I could hear the music and see the lights flash on and off and after I finished my lunch I decided to go where the machines were. I stood and walked around to the poker machines and found them exciting. I went and changed \$5 and I started to play. The machine was paying some money, the music, the sound of the free spins, the sound of the rolling pictures was going around and around and it was very exciting to my mind. I got addicted there and then. The pattern of the poker machine was established in my mind and on the way home I was already thinking to go the next day and play again. And I did. As I started to realise that I was losing too much of my money I tried to stop but the urge was too strong. I have tried to get help many times with counselling and other help but nothing has worked for me to stop.

In these 19 years I have seen many people of all ages come into the clubs for what ever reason and become addicted too poker machines.

In these 19 years of my addiction to poker machines I have spoken to many people at the clubs that are addicted and their stories are very disturbing:

- Young people are losing all their pay in the poker machines. They have no
 money left to meet their needs in life and have no future, resulting in a deep
 depression.
- 2. Older people have lost all their money in the poker machines that they have saved at a younger age. Even having to sell some of their belongings, leaving them with just the pension and even some of the pension money they put in machine, resulting in deep depression.
- 3. Middle age people have sold properties and put money in the poker machines, have taken loans on the house etc. and put money in the poker machine, most of the weekly pay in the poker machine, resulting in deep depression
- 4. Married people with families put most of their weekly pay in the poker machines resulting in financial problems to pay the bills. Children suffer because the parents argue because of their poker machine addiction all the family suffer from depression.

The law doesn't allow drugs to be left on the table at the clubs for people that are addicted to drugs to have. But the law allows the club owners to turn the poker

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machines on in the clubs to have addicted people play and even get some more people addicted to poker machines. It's like they say to the people addicted to poker machines 'come and leave your money in the poker machines for us'.

Yours Sincerely,

Name: Judy

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19th Jun