27 January 2011

Committee Secretary
Joint Select Committee on Gambling Reform
Po Box 6100
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Inquiry into Gambling Pre-commitment Scheme

Please accept this submission to the Inquiry into the pre-commitment scheme of EGM's on behalf of the Wagga RSL and Wagga Commercial Club Ltd.

An overview of the club

The Wagga RSL and the Wagga Commercial Clubs have a membership base of over 21000. We operate 195 EGM's at the RSL and 35 EGM's Commercial Club. The Club also provide two fully maintained bowling greens and provides two modern venues for many social and community activities.

You can visit our website and see the facilities that we provide to the Community www.waggarsl.com.au along with all the donations we have contributed to various organizations in the community.

Effect of Mandatory Pre commitment on these venues

As Andrew Wilke MP has reportedly stated that pre commitment will have a 40% reduction in gaming revenue with this being the case we will not have a club industry to provide the community with these venues and facilities. I could present you with figures showing a reduction in revenue and giving examples but as mentioned the whole club industry would not survive such a decline in revenue.

Alternate forms of Gambling

This inquiry is focusing on pre-commitment of EGM's. There are many other forms of gambling in our society and I believe it can be said that none of these offer the player the same protection that currently exists within the Registered Club Industry.

Gambling in an environment that has policies in place to assist those with gambling problems and wishing to overcome those problems can only be of assistance. Many other forms of gambling allow the person to do so without the knowledge of those around them.

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Take internet gambling for example. One can open an account register a credit card or multiple cards and max these out without intervention.

A bet on the horses can have the same result, and there is no limit at the TAB or at home with account betting. As a matter of fact the NSW TAB has increased the minimum bet from 50 cents to $3.00. Is this a responsible step? No doubt this has been sanctioned by various levels of government.

Responsible Gaming

Wagga RSL Club adopts responsible gaming principles in line with those legislated and beyond. All Staff associated with gaming activities posses Responsible Gambling accreditation.

Wagga RSL Club is a member of Clubs NSW Club safe programme, and has relationships with other local counseling services. Appropriate signage is in place as is signage offering the alternate local services.

Summary

It has been stated that 0.375% of the adult population are problem gamblers with EGM's contributing to that problem, yet 100% of the population will suffer if the ability of Registered Clubs to provide the community support and facilities and employment they currently provide are jeopardized due to the implementation of mandatory is pre commitment of EGM's in the industry.

Yes 0.375% of our adult population are problem gamblers with EGM's contributing to that problem. This means 99.625% of our adult population will suffer and have to comply with any mandatory pre commitment scheme established to supposedly "assist" the minority.

Identifying EGM's as the only form of gambling for pre commitment will only move the problem to other forms of gambling, and may I suggest the issue will become much more difficult to address as gamblers become more anonymous in an environment where facilities other than cash can (and in some cased must) be used to place a bet.

Mandatory pre commitment is not the answer; however a flexible voluntary pre commitment scheme for **all** forms of gambling may be a partial answer. Such a scheme would need to be flexible and not place unnecessary and unaffordable financial pressure on venues. Nor should in inconvenience the 99.5% of the population who are not identified as problem gamblers; who use the facilities provided by registered clubs for entertainment and relaxation; and who benefit from the support clubs provide to the community.

Yours faithfully,
WAGGA RSL CLUB

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