Copy of consumer email received in relation to Joint Select Committee Submission Process by info@gisnsw.org.au on 18/1/11 (name changed to protect anonymity).

Hi Kate,

Thanks for telling me about this, I knew nothing of it, I will try and put one in though time will be my enemy. It is pretty woeful really that the public doesn't know about these things. I'm reasonably aware of what is going on with this issue mainly through my own efforts of informing myself via the net. However, due to the volume of information and restrictions on available time etc it is easy to miss things unless specifically alerted in some way. For ordinary people who have been touched by this problem but don't generally involve themselves, how would they ever be informed to voice their concerns on specific matters.

All during the inquiry by the Productivity Commission I made it my business to read as much as possible of all submissions, transcripts, draft and final report. Once again we are stuck in this situation of focusing on one aspect, where it is easy to come up with reasons as to why it won't work as reflected in submissions to this current pre commitment inquiry (I was reading them last night). I wholeheartedly agree when the Productivity Commission said -" In summary, the Commission is proposing a comprehensive, coordinated and carefully sequenced package of reforms to gambling regulation. A package of measures is more likely to be effective than any single measure alone". (P. 40)

The reason I said about the $1 bet limit (when being a choice only between these two) is because I knew of the fuss that would be made over full pre commitment and if we end up with some ineffective voluntary system where all these other dangerous aspects of gaming machines remain untouched we will be hardly better off than we are now - and these aspects will keep evolving. The impression given will be that pre commitment (as useless as it may end up being) will be deemed as taking care of many of these aspects. To install an ineffective voluntary system while allowing these other dangerous aspects to remain unchanged just gives the industry what it wants - once again at the community's expense. To me (even while taking into consideration their inevitable protests) choosing the $1 bet limit upfront was *maybe* more cut and dry and would at least get our foot in the door, however on its own, it is in no way good enough to reduce the harms from these machines.

As far as I am concerned the Productivity Commission got it right. Although they emphasized the importance of pre commitment they still recommended other significant changes to the machines/environment. The $1 bet limit, insertion of $20 max without inserting other notes until credits fall below $20 (a crucial aspect of this recommendation), restrictions on ATMs, changes to hours of operation. These are very direct ways of reducing/preventing harm. All these aspects working together will make a big difference but none on their own will do the job.

One other aspect of narrowly focusing on pre commitment is once the detractors have decided it won't work for whatever reason they start waffling on about other things - as if we are starting all over again. However, the Productivity Commission

waded through so much stuff and went to a lot of trouble to come up with recommendations that really target the problem. However, Blaszczynski wants to go somewhere else and Mr. Allcock is talking about lower limits in relation to 'jackpots', commenting on machines he saw in England. Australian machines found in suburban clubs and pubs are high intensity, high bet levels etc whereas in England, among other factors there are differences between them depending on where they are located as even children can play on a certain type. I found it surprising that he mentioned helpline numbers on machines - *what*, something that is not commonly found on machines here? Although I didn't agree with everything the Commission said, overall, the recommendations of the Productivity Commission brings the product back to a level where it will be more manageable for ordinary people.

Reforms to poker machines could set a precedent for other forms of gambling (we have to start somewhere and no better place than with these machines).

One of my favourite statements from the Productivity Commission that I can absolutely vouch for :

"What, in fact, was clearly lacking was compelling evidence of the safety of some forms of gambling for consumers – and for the relaxation of regulations that permitted the widespread availability of high intensity gambling within communities around much of Australia. Much of this report aims to correct the consequences of this oversight". P3.31

I hope it all goes well at the hearing I will be thinking of you.

Sincerely,

Susan.