



**Numurkah Golf &
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Committee Secretary
Joint Select Committee on Gambling Reform
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
Australia

SUBMISSION ON PROBLEM GAMBLING AND HARM MINIMISATION

Dear Committee,

My name is Grant Duffy. I am the manager of the above named club and make this submission on behalf of the committee of management of this club.

I have worked in the "club" and gaming industry for around 20 years. In that time I have seen many attempts by Government's to protect the individuals in our community from the prospect of engaging in gambling which is over extended, outside the means of the individual and, in some cases, causing personal and financial hardship. Some of the processes to achieve this have seen rules implemented to increase light so people don't feel cocooned and lost in the gambling experience, then have seen that change to block out the outside world so minors cannot see in. I have seen clocks needing to be put on every machine, as a clock on a wall is not enough. I have seen a gaming inspector check the lux level of lighting at a statutory distance and height from a poker machine, I have seen staff be compelled to make a PA announcement advising gaming patrons to take a break from gaming and have a coffee. All these processes developed with the best intentions are in my opinion ineffective.

A couple of observations I have on the problem gambling debate are:

1. Every gambling Venue and organisation is treated the same (However, they are not the same)

As an example, our club's primary focus is not to increase shareholder wealth, and our management receive no financial incentives to drive profits. Our role is to provide a credible sports and recreation facility for our community, which we do. Our Board members receive no remuneration but play their role as active, interested contributors to our community. I would much more trust them to make an assessment of the net social / economic benefits of operating our gaming license in Numurkah than I would brilliant consultants, who charge overpriced fees to compile irrelevant statistics. Whilst this will offend many and not sit well with the academics involved in the debate, it is my view, and I believe my view should carry more weight than a bureaucrat, consultant or academic, as I live here.

The Board of this club are here to improve the quality of local living, not take away from it. They believe our gaming license and people's free choice to access the products we offer, contribute to the net economic and social outcomes in our community.

Can you imagine living in a small country town of 4,600 people and advocating and administering a product which is destroying a portion of our community? We wouldn't be able to live here.

Maybe (though many don't want to hear it) the fact is our gaming license in Numurkah does not create anymore social and economic harm to individuals than over eating, smoking, drugs or alcohol. I do not mention these to play down the damage done to some individuals through excessive gambling, I merely wish to make a point of my view of the scope of the problem.

2. My second observation is the problem with a culture of problem gambling rarely being seen as irresponsible or inappropriate action of the individual partaking in the gambling, but more so irresponsibility of gambling license holders.

In some cases, persons who do damage to themselves or their families, should simply be categorised as irresponsible (Of course still assisted to correct the behaviour), I don't think it helps a society when persons that actively and knowingly engage in a behaviour which is inappropriate, know in the end society will not see them as culpable.

If my experience in the industry is worth considering, I say of course there will be persons who will struggle with gambling, however, the many social problems for people in our society are best dealt with by education, care and sometimes intervention. Whilst we all wish there was zero harm from the many adult choices we make, I don't see it happening.

My view again is to allow people to do the things they wish to do, if it creates harm to the individual more time than not they will walk away and reduce the harm to themselves. However, those who will not or cannot (with regard to gambling) need identification and intervention.

Compulsory pre commitment not the answer

To compel me or our members to be registered and commit to how much we wish to gamble, in my view is not what a free society likes or deserves, let us make our own choices and let's commit to help those who need it.

I suppose when I hear the debates about problem gambling and its prevalence, I often hear the anti-gambling lobby state that the views of the industry who benefit from gambling are biased for a reason. However, it appears to me the most secure job in the industry in this country in recent years has been those who work in the "problem gambling industry".

The reason we do not support compulsory pre-commitment is not so we can go on and make personal fortunes. We simply think it will destroy a bona-fide recreational activity we provide for our community and which they enjoy. We get to invest the benefits back into the well being of our community.

Maybe the committee would like to come to Numurkah and visit our club and talk to our people to see what this club's gaming license is all about.

Yours sincerely, _____

Grant Duffy ACCM
Manager