

From: Nicolás Goc <campaigns@good.do>
Sent: Monday, 21 November 2016 8:28 PM
To: fgm
Subject: Submission to the Joint Select Committee on Future Gaming Markets

Dear Members of the Committee,

I have researched this issue and have looked to those who have the knowledge and the facts to inform my decision against poker machines. I do not know Tony Reidy, the chief executive of the Tasmanian Council of Social Service (TasCOSS), but he is the voice of the voiceless and powerless in our society. He tells us that at least 2,500 Tasmanians have a gambling problem and that for every one of those five to 10 people are also directly affected.

“We're having problem gambling having a direct impact on about 27,500 Tasmanians and around about 2,000 of those are children in households affected by problem gambling.”

It is the poorest Tasmanians who were usually hit hardest by gambling-related issues.

Recent research (Markham, Doran and Young 2016) suggests a link between the number of poker machines in an area and levels of domestic violence.

The “Golden Mile” – one of the key concerns of many Tasmanians is that there is a concentration of poker machines in particular in lower socio-economic areas. Clearly this is a recipe for financial disaster and social upheaval for many families. Recently an application was lodged for more poker machines in Glenorchy, the area which has one of the highest concentrations of poker machines in the state. This is also an area where many people are unemployed or earning minimum wages. Family life is disrupted by addiction to poker machines and by financial deprivation which leads to domestic violence and destroys family cohesion. Children are at the greatest risk and are deeply affected by parents' who are addicted to gambling on poker machines. The harm to the entire Tasmanian community is significant.

The State Government recently announced that new applications for poker machines would be subject to a public interest test. The public demands to know how this process is done and who determines ‘public interest’? Mr Gutwin has said that a public interest test would “take into account the views of the community, importantly, and a range of matters including density, the proliferation of pokies in a particular area, those sorts of issues,” Mr Gutwein said. It is clear that the Glenorchy venue, Paddy Wagon, does need meet the public interest test based on public reaction and the density of poker machines in this area.

The manager of Anglicare's Social Action and Research Centre, Meg Webb, says a pause on applications is appropriate at this time. She says the timing of the Glenorchy Paddy Wagon proposal is ‘very interesting’ considering “we've got a parliamentary process in play right now about where poker machines are located in this state, how many we have, and what the community really think about them”. Ms Webb says the “concept of adding poker machines to Glenorchy at this time is inflammatory in this process.” “We could just say let's pause it, let's have this process play out and let's make a decision once we know the outcome of our parliamentary inquiry.” I am not only concerned for those who are addicted to poker machines, but I am concerned at the unethical business model behind these machines which lures people in and persuades them through visual and audio sensory ‘bells and whistles’ to gamble when logic tells them they cannot win. The fact that the machines are formulated to create the desire in rational people to continue gambling, and that they are calibrated so that the odds are always in favour of the house is morally corrupt.

In 2015 Tasmanian Treasury figures indicated an average of about \$16 million was lost each month on the state's 3,500 pokies.

In August 2016 the latest Australian gambling statistics show \$114 million was lost on Tasmania's club and pub gaming machines in 2014/15, up from \$111 million the year before. It is estimated about \$90 million was lost in Tasmania's casinos on the machines.

We also know that about a third of poker machine revenue, or about \$69 million, in 2015 went to the Federal Group, which had monopoly ownership of poker machines in Tasmania. This is a monopoly that is weighted heavily in favour of Federal Group. The benefits to the people of Tasmania are far less than the spin-doctors at Federal would have us believe. Both major parties receive significant donations from the Federal Group. This is an incentive for the parties to put politics above ethics and a genuine concern for Tasmanians. In 2023 the Federal Group's monopoly licence to operate all poker machines in Tasmania expires. It is unconscionable for any government in Tasmania to renew this licence. Now is the time for reform. Tasmania should be working towards an end to the scourge of poker machines from 2013.

Tasmania does not need poker machines. West Australia does not have poker machines. Tasmania has the highest density of poker machines of any state in Australia

An ethical government with a genuine concern for its citizens would be committed to reigning in the poker machine licenses. But what we have seen from both sides of parliament is the lure of the federal donation dollars and tax dollars which continue to ensure secret corrupt behind-the-scenes deals which impact on all Tasmanians. Enough is enough. Time to take a stand.

Yours sincerely, Nicolás

Reference: Markham, F, and B. Doran and Martin Young (2016) "The relationship between electronic gaming machine accessibility and police-recorded domestic violence: A spatio-temporal analysis of 654 postcodes in Victoria, Australia, 2005–2014", Social Science and Medicine, Vol 162, August 2016, Pages 106–114.

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