

**Julie Thompson**

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**From:** Gerard and Sally McGushin <mcgushin@bigpond.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, 13 November 2016 7:50 AM  
**To:** fgm  
**Subject:** submission to Joint Select Committee on Future Gaming Markets  
**Attachments:** I lived in Queenstown when poker machines were introduced to the clubs and pubs.docx

To :

The Secretary  
Joint Select Committee on Future Gaming Markets Legislative Council Parliament House Hobart 7000

Please find above my submission to the Committee.  
I would be happy to appear before the Committee during hearings.

Best wishes to the Committee.

Sincerely,

Sally McGushin

## Submission to the Joint Select Committee on Future Gaming Markets 2016

From Sally McGushin (individual)

I lived in Queenstown when poker machines were introduced to the clubs and pubs. At that time there was no ground swell of public opinion in Queenstown nor the West Coast generally to bring poker machines into the community even though miners are known to be notorious gamblers. This was a decision imposed on the community by the State Government and the Federal Group which operated (and continues to operate) the EGMs.

Miners have usually engaged in card and table gambling games, dogs and horses, all of which provide some social element as well as interest, character, colour, some opportunity for skill (card counting, knowing the horses) , and some level of chance. Electronic gaming machines are soulless, designed particularly to attract the weak and vulnerable and suck out their money and lives. There is no skill and there is no chance

The EGM lights and sounds are mesmerising. They are designed to be so. I doubt whether I am the only parent who has had to steer her child away from making a bee line to these seemingly exciting attractions when going for a family counter meal. They hold so much promise. Yet we know that they are rigged against the gambler. Taken into the communities with apparently "innocent" encouragements such as cheap meals, warmth and vicarious friendship of the staff, these machines prey on the addicts, particularly the problem gamblers at the expense of those gamblers, their families and the community as a whole. Poker machines are sold to the public as entertainment and they suck the players into thinking that they are winning when in fact they are losing. It devalues us all that we should allow such an insidious process with the government promising to repay the community through lower taxes and community grants that ride on the back of gambling money. This is just illusory. The money has come from the community in the first place, and those who can least afford it seem to pay the most.

When I was in Queenstown I was involved with a tourism venture that regularly took me into the hotels to distribute promotional materials. I usually went in the morning, before the lunch crowds. What I observed was that the same people would regularly be sitting at the machines each time I went. I might change my time slightly and I might change the day but they would still be there, month after month. And it did not matter how long I spent at any one venue, on each visit I would still see the same patrons who had been fixated on their machine as arrived, as the ones when I left. These are the problem gamblers.

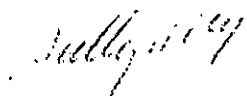
There are 55 poker machines on the West Coast to service a population of less than 4,500 people. It is hard not to draw the conclusion that the West Coast is seen as a soft target, where people may be more vulnerable and likely to succumb to the hypnotic poker machines. West Coasters are more vulnerable due to their isolation, their lack of services and the increasingly transient and precarious nature of their communities. It is sickening that the poker machine operators are allowed to take advantage of people in this way. There should be some consumer protection around these machines. This deliberate targeting of areas is morally wrong.

Recent publicity given to the amount of money being lost on the pokies in Glenorchy has led to allegations that the community of Glenorchy is also being targeted. This is a relatively depressed area both socially and economically. People are hoping for their big chance and they perceive the pokies as offering that. It is unconscionable that the poker machine operators should be allowed to exploit vulnerable people in this manner.

Ideally poker machines should be removed from the communities. The operators and the State Government not the consumers introduced them. (Indeed when the Brighton Council tried to ban them from its municipality, it was overridden.) And for the remaining poker machines, harm minimization schemes need to be put in place including \$1 bet limits and also some sort of responsible serving of gambling with the onus placed on the licensees such as is in place with regard to the responsible serving of alcohol. Just as the alcohol licensee does not serve alcohol to someone who is intoxicated, the gambling licensee should be required to restrict the gambling of the addicted individual. Gratuitous enticements such as a free cup of coffee should be prohibited. Hours of operation should be restricted. Furthermore, venues could do more to support consumers who sign self-exclusion forms.

When the Legislative Council Committee looked into Poker machine expansion in 1993, Greg Farrell initially argued against the expansion, pointing out that it took a conscious effort to get to the casinos whereas machines in hotels and clubs are easily accessed by a large number of people, "some of whom cannot afford to gamble". Of course the compromise for the Farrell family was that they were allowed exclusive ownership of the poker machines. One might question whether this has exacerbated the situation as the lack of competition has enabled the poker machine operators to maximize their profits. If other operators were allowed in, surely the odds in favour of the gambler would be increased, and hopefully the addicts would lose less.

Nevertheless the point is that Greg Farrell's argument against having poker machines in the suburbs and towns was valid. It has proved itself to be true. People are able to access poker machines very easily, and too many of them cannot afford to gamble. So the State government has a moral obligation to remove poker machines from the communities as well as to review and strengthen harm minimisation strategies on all forms of gambling, but particularly any remaining poker machines.



Sally McGushin