

**THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE IMPACTS OF GAMING MACHINES MET IN THE TRAINING ROOM, BURNIE CITY COUNCIL, BURNIE, ON THURSDAY 18 APRIL 2002**

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**CATHERINE FERNON AND BRETT WHITELEY WERE CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WERE EXAMINED.**

**CHAIR** (Mrs Silvia Smith) - Welcome Catherine and Brett. Thank you very much for putting forward the option to give a submission to this committee because one of the things we like to do is hear submissions from all over the State and now we can happily include the north-west coast. Obviously you have a written submission which we have not seen so if you would take us through that submission and if you are happy with the procedure, if any of the members of the committee have a question as we are going through we will ask that. Is that okay with you?

**Cr WHITELEY** - Sure. Always welcome.

Thank you, Madam Chair, and members, Sue Smith and Geoff Squibb. We do appreciate the opportunity, I must say, to have some input, albeit limited, into this particular select committee. Catherine and I will interact, if that is okay, and no doubt will prompt each other. Some things I will forget and some things maybe Catherine will.

The Burnie City Council has been concerned about the immediate and long-term social and economic impacts of poker machines in hotels and clubs since their introduction back in 1997. I think our concern has been expressed quite clearly through letters to the Premier and support for similar actions by other councils around the State either individually or collectively through the Local Government Association of Tasmania. In August 2001, the Burnie City Council passed a motion overwhelmingly that actually said that in support of the decision taken by the Hobart City Council, council will write to the Premier calling on the State Government to implement the following actions: firstly, to prevent any further increase in the number of poker machines in the City of Burnie; secondly, to demand an assessment independent of government to immediately establish and report on (a) the social and economic impacts of the expanded operations of poker machines throughout the community in pubs and clubs; and (b) the adequacy of current funding and services for gaming-addicted persons and for gaming affected families and may we say, gaming affected communities. In response to this motion the council received a letter from the Premier citing contractual obligations that bind the Government to a deed of agreement contained in the Gaming Control Act of 1993. The letter stated that any change such as preventing an increase in the number of gaming machines, or VGMs as we refer to them in our submission, could result in lengthy legal proceedings concerning compensation and send a negative signal to the business community about doing business in Australia. The Premier's letter also referred to a report released on 16 March 2001, a third study into the extent and impact of gambling in Tasmania with particular reference to problem gambling. This report will be referred to later in the submission.

In compiling the submission, the council feels very qualified to make comment on the following terms of reference: reference one, the immediate and long-term social and economic impacts upon the community of the expanded operation of poker machines in hotel and clubs. I will just go off the submission and say that the council, we believe, can only reflect so much of the argument. The real impact and the real soul of this issue is to be found in the life stories, may I say very sad life stories, of those watching members of their family or their friends throw their lives away in relation to problem gambling. These people often stand by and attempt to support and restore their friends and family to normality.

I find it quite interesting that over the last year or so we have had a little fox apparently running around our region. To see the amount of resources, concern and money thrown into this particular area because of the potential damage that this fox and its mating habits may have on the community, I find it quite alarming to see that when it comes to the issue of gaming where there is also a huge potential for damage in our community being potentially left on the shelf with people saying it is not an issue. I think it is an issue and I also think that we have to be prepared to throw the resources behind further investigations in this area.

The Reverend Tim Costello at a presentation at the local TAFE recently referred to a Productivity Commission report where it says there are seven people impacted when one person has a difficulty in the area of gaming. The flow-on impact of this particular issue is quite large. The productivity levels in our local businesses are not just being reflected in those people with a gaming problem, it is being reflected in their husbands, their wives, their parents, their children. It is obviously having an enormous impact on the productivity of this nation. We will refer to that a little bit later on. Thanks Catherine.

**Ms FERNON** - I am just going to talk about the next section. In putting together the submission we tried to undertake quite a bit of research and most of that research actually concentrated on figures that addressed national or State consequences and used those sorts of figures but they never actually addressed impacts on local communities and took into account local demographics, perhaps thinking that we are all equal. We all know that we are definitely not all equal and we do not all have the same amount of resources and we do not all have the same choices.

It is quite well documented that the Mersey-Lyell region is experiencing probably very long-term unemployment levels. It has had a lot of redundancies. The people who are lucky enough to work do not get a very high income and it has a lot of entrenched long-term problems. That was the thing that really impacted on me as a community development officer, not being able to find out the actual local impacts through our research.

That is another thing that when we talk about qualified, we feel we are qualified because we know the problems that the community experiences but we found it very difficult and we went through lots of avenues to get figures about our own local areas. We did look at other councils in other States and they were able to get some sorts of information which we were not able to get from the ABS. That was quite an interesting thing in itself, the actual availability of information to people trying to get figures that would allow people to make informed opinions.

**CHAIR** - It is more broad information that you can get rather than localised and that is a comment that is constantly coming through.

**Ms FERNON** - Yes. However, I think that people do have to recognise the problems that our region and Burnie, in particular, have. Hence the title of our submission which is 'Gambling can be a problem without people being problem gamblers'. We think that in all the research that we did people kept talking about problem gamblers but not communities with problems and gambling being another problem that has been added to that community.

The latest figures are not available from the ABS but we do not think that those figures will show much of a change in unemployment rates as I have them down there. These are 1999 and we do not think that the unemployment rates have changed. They have probably become a little bit worse. We know that those rates do not include those people who are not employed full time and might be doing other things. We all know about that. It just talks about the median income of the Mersey-Lyell region which is only personal weekly income which is only personal weekly income which is only \$237.

Burnie is an interesting suburb. The Healthy Community survey that was carried out two years by the Department of Health, which was quite an extensive survey and is recognised now and referred to in lots of areas including, I think, the State Government's latest report, talks about Burnie as being one area which has particular problems because it has on one hand a small section of high-income earners, and then on the other hand a very large section of low-income earners, which gives the community special problems in itself. And, as I said, here is the title of our submission, where we feel that gambling - and later in our submission we have made some calculations about the amount of money we think is going out of our community. It is not about how much a person is able to spend nationally, a figure taken on how much a person spends per week, but it is really about how much disposable income a family has, and even \$20 that comes out of a low-income family is a huge difference, as opposed to figures that are used in other areas. So we feel that people in our community are already experiencing high levels of hardship, and the gaming machines that have come into our community - we talk about those a bit later - have really taken away. We feel they do not have the choice that people might have in other communities. Therefore this argument of free choice is a really hard one to swallow.

If I can just go on and talk about choice, for a person to have choice we think there need to be things in place. A person who does not have as much access to services, personal income, happiness, good health, all those sorts of things, their choices are limited. We have some people coming in who we think can talk for themselves about choices that people in their family have made, but we actually referred to a forum that was conducted in Burnie in 1999 which was a Just Tasmania forum, and we have included in our submission some excerpts from participants who spoke at those forums about the way they saw their life and the choices that they thought were available for them. We have included the words of five participants, and the second one, if I can just read that through, this person was about gambling. It was interesting that there was concern expressed that the gambling industry was, in their words, exploiting the desperation of their position. The second one there says, 'It's a habit. You think you'll get away, you will be free, but one day I spent my pension and was left with \$30 for the rest of the fortnight. I walked out and thought, why did I do that?' I think probably the second-last

one is the most telling when we talk about the community and the people who are limited in the choices that are available, where a person is talking about their son wanting some money to go to something, and he started crying, and the person took their last \$20 and went to the poker machines so they could actually get a bit of money to give to their son so he could have an excursion.

**Mr WHITELEY** - If I could just interrupt there, that particular story there, the fourth story in our illustrations, actually goes to the heart of this issue where gaming venues and the actual philosophy around gaming is that a win is just around the corner, to the point where you take your last \$20 to send your child on that excursion, the win is just around the corner and there is a lot of false hope that is actually promoted and marketed that emanates actually from this particular industry, and I think that's got to be sad.

**Mrs SUE SMITH** - So that sort of choice they see as their only choice to maybe get a bit more income to do whatever other people might have.

**Mr WHITELEY** - But in the last particular illustration too, before I move on to the next area, people are very judgmental about people on low incomes who smoke or gamble. In the end you start believing the negative stereotypes and you start to feel worthless. I have had six or seven years' experience as a pastor in a church dealing with a lot of particular issues. At the time I was actually in that the gaming area was not such a big issue as it is now, but when I hear the word 'worthless' come from the mouths of people, alarm bells ring, and I do not want to be emotive in this submission so I won't even use the word, but I think we all understand what I am saying. When people start to feel they have no value in their community or that they are actually a burden and of no worth to their family, that leads them to make very severe choices in life, and we have all probably experienced that at close hand.

Moving on to the next section of the submission, in January 2001 the Mersey-Lyell region had 35 licensed gaming premises and 581 machines within its boundaries. The Burnie local government area has five licensed gaming premises and 108 machines, or 18.5 per cent of the total machines. The premises consist of four hotels and one club. Three of these hotels have 25 machines, the maximum that is actually currently allowed, and the other has 15, while the club has 18. It is council's understanding that the Tasmanian Gaming Control Act of 1993 allows for a further increase in the maximum number of machines - that is, up to 30 in a hotel and 40 in a club - by June 2003. Quick calculations would indicate that is potentially another 100 machines based on the figures we are using, which again Catherine referred to as being fairly broad, but we are using them specifically for Burnie. Those 100 machines would actually increase the losses again nearly to another million dollars on top of the figures you will read about shortly.

**Mrs SUE SMITH** - If I might just interrupt there for a moment, Brett, does every hotel have gaming machines, or do you have hotels without them?

**Mr WHITELEY** - I believe we have hotels without them.

**Ms FERNON** - Yes, we have hotels without them.

**Mrs SUE SMITH** - So the issue is that those hotels without them could apply for licences and also get -

**Mr WHITELEY** - Oh, they could actually come into the market, come into the loop, that is correct.

**Mr SQUIBB** - That is correct. There is no limit on the number of venues.

**Mr WHITELEY** - I think that is right, yes.

**Mr SQUIBB** - There is no.

**Mr WHITELEY** - Thanks, Geoff. So they could actually decide, 'Hey, we want to be a part of the action', or alternatively they may have to fight off competition within the current players.

**Mrs SUE SMITH** - So are you aware of the number of hotels in the Burnie local government area that do not have them?

**Mr WHITELEY** - No, not off the top of my head, Sue. Do you know the number, Catherine?

**Ms FERNON** - No.

**Mrs SUE SMITH** - Without my having to do a pub crawl.

*Laughter.*

**Mr WHITELEY** - Past June 2003 the legislation ceases to define the upper limit, as we understand it - correct us, please, if we are wrong -

**Mr SQUIBB** - That is correct.

**Mr WHITELEY** - Is that correct? And allows the decision to be made by the Gaming Commission and the companies involved. So, to steal a good line that has often been heard before, that would be like putting Dracula in charge of the blood bank. Research undertaken by councils in other States indicates that the new machine licences are granted to the most profitable venues, most of which are in the State's least affluent suburbs.

**Mrs SUE SMITH** - Are you referring to the research done by the South Australian Provincial Cities, and then by Victoria?

**Mr WHITELEY** - That is correct.

**Mrs SUE SMITH** - Are there any other studies we have not tracked?

**Mr GREY** - No, they are the only ones I have been able to find.

**Mr WHITELEY** - The council cannot help but be concerned by activity that results in large amounts of money draining out of the community for no obvious benefits. Figures obtained from the Gaming Control Commission's annual report show that since the

introduction of VGMs into clubs and hotels during the 1996 financial year, there has been an increase in both revenue and turnover of approximately 1 500 per cent. For example, the turnover recorded from gaming in clubs and hotels for the 1996-97 financial year was \$45 million, increasing to nearly \$750 million in the 2001 financial year. On a per capita basis these figures mean there was a turnover of \$30.699 million in the Burnie area. Now again the specifics of the Burnie area cannot be obtained, but we can only do the per capita across the whole broad spectrum. We have given some charts there that we will leave for perusal, but I think the key figure is 1 500 per cent in just five years. It is a phenomenal increase, and I am sure businesses in our community would have been fairly happy with those sorts of increases in their turnover.

Gaming revenue paid to the State Government in the form of taxation has increased from \$1.6 million in 1996-97 to \$25.385 million in 2000-01. On a per capita basis this means that the Burnie community paid just over \$1 million in gaming taxes alone. These figures do not include obviously the amount of money that has been going to the gaming companies that own the machines, and it does not also include the money that is actually retained after the payment of some fees and hire charges by the actual gaming venues. But we can safely assume you can multiply that by three without too much problem. I must say, too, these figures do not include keno, as I understand it, they do not include TAB and they do not include Tattslotto. We are talking purely and simply about gaming machines.

Advice received from TasCOSS, who have been very helpful, I must say, but are also very frustrated as we have been about the lack of information that they can actually access, indicates that last year \$60 million was lost on gambling in Tasmania. Burnie's proportion of this would be approximately \$5 million. Should there be an increase in gaming machines post-June 2003 you could safely assume excluding CPI that that figure is going to climb very quickly over \$6 million. These are in actual losses. Per capital spending on gaming, which is probably a better word than gambling there in the report - must either reduce household expenditure in other areas, increase household debt levels, or ultimately reduce savings. All three scenarios have a negative impact on the local community and therefore on local government.

The Productivity Commission in its final report released in December 1999 entitled *Inquiry into Australia's Gambling Industry* has noted at page 60 of the report: 'What role for local government?' - a question that is often asked of local government; what is our role, to the extent that decisions about gambling accessibility have their predominant impacts at the level of local communities. This would suggest the need for a collective say at that level. Local communities have generally had little such opportunity. Local government's main influence has been confined to its planning approval powers for new establishments or extensions to existing ones, may I say, with the exception of industries such as alcohol and gaming. We have some input into the process, but at the end of the day we have little power. However, even these mechanisms have been over-ridden by State gambling legislation in some jurisdictions. The principle of local communities being consulted has force. The control authority should at least be required to consult with local communities in making decisions about licence applications. This could include surveys or major issue referenda.

May I say at this point, Madam Chairman, I personally, and I know my fellow aldermen find it quite extraordinary - and I do not want to turn this into a debate on other issues,

that is not my intention - that we are seen to have so much maturity as a local government that we can actually assist in the process of determining seven day trading and the major implications of that, and yet for some reason we do not have the maturity to actually have input and have a say in an issue such as gaming. I think this is a very key point, and I do not believe that this Government, and probably any government, has been consistent in this area. They are more than prepared to shift decisions onto local government which I see as the most grassroots level of government in the country, without constitutional recognition, by the way, and yet when it comes to some issues like this there is no consistency. We are not consulted, we are not included, and it actually sends a message that we have nothing to say or nothing to input, and I think that is very sad, because what we see - it happens at local government level, and I think many of you have had experience - is that this impact of gaming impacts discretionary spending.

Lack of discretionary spending impacts things like membership to the local football club, the local tennis club. Lack of membership of those sporting clubs as an example leads to lack of funds to do asset replacement, to the upgrade of facilities as we move into the 21st century, and so on and so forth. Who are the people that these clubs and community groups come to when the rubber hits the road and they do not have the financial resources? We all know. It is local government. They are on our doorstep, and we welcome that, and we do our best to actually help where possible. But this problem is going to grow, and it is going to grow with more impact coming into local government.

**Mrs SUE SMITH** - While we are on that issue of consultation, your thoughts on how that would happen. Would you see something like increasing or new gaming machines in the Burnie City Council area requiring a social impact study that they are required to liaise with the community through the local government, or can you see other ways of involving local government, outside of a new venue where it is planning issues? The number of machines really does not involve planning.

**Mr WHITELEY** - It doesn't at the moment. Maybe it should. I think you summed it up fairly well there. I believe absolutely that local government should have a say in at least demanding an impact study as things change. I mean, you cannot even change -

**Mr SQUIBB** - Social impact.

**Mr WHITELEY** - Yes, very much. Social, economic -

**Mr SQUIBB** - Well, would you go to economic? You don't do economic for any other form of land use.

**Mr WHITELEY** - No, that is a fair point, but are we actually comparing apples with apples? We are talking here about potential damaging impact on local businesses. I take your point.

**Mr SQUIBB** - But you don't do it for service stations or hotels themselves.

**Mr WHITELEY** - No, we do not, that is a fair point, but I think what we could do. We have a situation where you cannot even change the operation of a particular premises without planning permission, so why can't local government have some influence in the debate

when it comes to social impacts, and I think there is a good reason, or should I say a good solid -

**Mr SQUIBB** - I did not question the social part, but the economic part, to be consistent.

**Mr WHITELEY** - No, I take your point, Geoff. Yes, to be consistent.

**Mrs SUE SMITH** - If a local hotel venue decides to change its focus to discos Thursdays, Fridays, Saturday evening, which can have an effect on communities noise-wise perhaps depending where it is established, what is the role of local government in that process - before, during or after the event?

**Mr WHITELEY** - Before, as I understand it.

**Mr SQUIBB** - What is it, or what should it be?

**Mr WHITELEY** - I think we have some jurisdiction now. It would come through a planning process, as I understand it. There obviously would have to be an opportunity for the public to have some input into that, if it is outside of any particular zoning situations. Surely -

**Mr SQUIBB** - If it was a discretionary use, normally you would be able to apply conditions, but if it is as a right, under planning - I am familiar with some but not necessarily with the Burnie one - can you apply conditions?

**Mr WHITELEY** - I believe so. I would have to check that again, but I believe yes.

**Mrs SUE SMITH** - I would be interested if you could get someone in your planning department perhaps to follow that process through, that if the Grand Chancellor decided in its reinvention to go into the late night discos, would they have to, under their current licence, come to the council, or would it be a case of if the noise gets too loud your environmental aspect then is drawn in after the event, so to speak.

**Mr WHITELEY** - I will check that. Point taken.

**Mrs SUE SMITH** - So I would be interested if you could follow that one through. It is handy to have on-the-ground experience, and certainly the Local Government Association gave a very strong input into a similar vein, but would not have the on-the-ground planning expertise, of course, that you would have here in Burnie.

**Mr SQUIBB** - So you could perhaps provide that -

**Mr SQUIBB** - So you could perhaps provide that to us.

**Cr WHITELEY** - Yes, we will get Patrick to give it to you.

The council asks that consideration be given to amending the Gaming Control Act 1993 to allow an appeal right for the local community when gaming licences are established or extended. It is usual practice in the majority of licence and permit applications - for



example, food licenses and kennel applications, for the community to have the basic right of appeal.

Measuring the costs: estimating the costs of problem gambling is an extremely difficult exercise, as Catherine alluded to earlier. Dollar costs would allow the clearest comparisons, especially in relation to any economic benefits from gambling. However, to the problem gambler the costs can affect the life of the gambler and others in varied and profound ways. It is impossible to talk about human suffering in terms of money. It is more appropriate that the people directly affected and those who care for them are listened to in this area. That is why I started our comments by saying that we can only have limited input into this particular debate. It is far more effective, far more powerful and far more grass roots for you to actually hear some of the life stories.

**CHAIR** - Yes, we will be hearing some of those.

**Cr WHITELEY** - You will hear some more here this morning and we welcome that and we commend those people to you.

As well as cost to the individual and his or her family there are also broader costs to society. These costs could include costs of job losses, unemployment benefits, poor physical and mental health, treatment for problem gambling and costs for any gambling-related incidents of theft, embezzlement, divorce and so on. I know it is always very dangerous to talk about anecdotal evidence but in talking to someone only recently after they heard of our wanting to put in a submission, a very simple picture emerged. This person said that whilst they are quite eligible to include their family, their children on the public dental list, and that is often a long wait, in the past they have actually been able to afford to take their children to a private dentist. However, the impact of the debate we are having on gaming has now meant that they do not have as much money to spend and they are now on the dental waiting list. It is a very simple illustration of the onflow of the impact of this issue. I do not want to make this a political debate about dental waiting lists, but it is not being helped by the situation that we have just heard about. I think it actually has a downstream effect in probably more areas than I would even care to consider.

These costs are not mentioned in the latest study into the extent and impact of gambling in Tasmania released on 9 February 2001. They are, however, mentioned in the Productivity Commission's report and that is a report of high standing. Some estimated costs to society contained in that report are: bankruptcy-related issues to gambling, \$4 000 per bankruptcy, total annual cost \$1.3 million; lost productivity which I alluded to earlier, total cost is estimated to be \$21 million to \$150 million a year, a pretty big broadband; income loss when employed estimated at \$24 million; cost of staff replacement for the employer, \$22 million; court costs involving problem gamblers are estimated to cost \$5.6 million; prison terms related to problem gambling is estimated to be \$5.1 million each year and the financial costs of divorce or separation as a result of gambling estimated to be \$2.8 million.

**CHAIR** - Can you remember if they were figures indicative to Tasmania or national?

**Cr WHITELEY** - National. These costs calculated on a national basis are only given as estimates, however, they do support the concern by council that the community is paying

dearly for the profits enjoyed by a very few yet the community has no real say in the establishment or expansion of the cause of these costs.

**Ms FERNON** - And I think the point there is that they are national figures. We would like to see those figures for our community or Tasmania or the region. You just cannot get them. There are huge costs. There are a lot more costs. They have the methodology there and it is a credible report and we would like to see that sort of research undertaken because any decision has to look at those sorts of costs.

The next section is talking about accessibility. Just looking at the Productivity Commission's report, different reports can say different things and use numbers to come up with different arguments. We all know that but the Productivity Commission's report looked at the whole range of arguments and they decided that there was a definite connection between greater accessibility and the prevalence of problem gambling, particularly in relation to gaming machines. You really only have to look at the figures that Brett talked about before and you have to see that there has to be some sort of connection there. The report actually talks about accessibility is not just about proximity or just about closeness but it is about how welcoming these facilities make themselves, the ease of using gaming machines, entry conditions and all those sorts of things.

What we decided to do was send out some staff to go and visit some premises -

**Mr SQUIBB** - Was this as a penalty or as a reward?

**Ms FERNON** - to have a look and see what they thought about it, how accessible they thought they are and to have a look at all the conditions. They went to all the premises on the one night. This is the report that they came back with. They were two quite young members of staff.

**Cr WHITELEY** - Over 18.

**Ms FERNON** - Definitely.

**CHAIR** - That is good.

**Ms FERNON** - We have not named the hotels but -

**Cr WHITELEY** - I was prepared to make a comment at this point, Madam Chair. You have a situation in Burnie where we have, say, the Top of the Town which is located in an area that would fit the criteria that Catherine referred to, the difference in the higher income earning area and the lower. The Top of the Town is located in an area that would fit the lower end of income potential in anyone's family, yet, as we understand it - I always like to be careful with this but we do understand that The Top of the Town is amongst the top two or three turnover venues in the State. So even in our own backyard we have this discrepancy of location with a huge turnover, centrally located in the heart of a district that does not enjoy the highest incomes. We would like more information when it comes to the breakdown of these areas. The figures do not seem to be too transparent when it comes to these things.

**Ms FERNON** - I think if you read that table there it speaks for itself about the sorts of facilities that are available in one localised area. We were quite distressed to see that one hotel has now installed video games for children so they keep themselves occupied while their parents are using the gaming machines. We find that a particularly distressing thing that that has been able to be introduced. I think that that table lays it out pretty clearly. When they went there it was daylight saving. It was light but all the curtains were drawn. You could not see. They were not encouraging people to even look outside. Everything you would want there.

It says that from the above information it can be deduced that the facilities in Burnie and presumably elsewhere are designed to ensure that the gambler never has to leave. You can generally buy your drinks, have a smoke, buy a snack, go to the toilet, use EFTPOS and cash your money all within the confines of the very one close area. Added to this the free spin features as a promotion, the rewards, the music that goes off, all that sort of thing seems to encourage people to play longer and spend more time.

**Mr SQUIBB** - Can I just ask about the comment in regard to the EFTPOS which you have mentioned there, that each of the facilities, I think has it available. Was any check done on whether in fact the code of conduct was being adhered to? In that, under the code of conduct, it is supposedly only possible to have one transaction.

**Ms FERNON** - No we did not do that.

**CHAIR** - I just want to clarify, you say cash machines?

**Mr WHITELEY** - Yes.

**CHAIR** - Are you meaning where people can get change to get their coins?

**Mr WHITELEY** - Yes, that is right. But that is a moving technology now, but that is true.

**CHAIR** - You're not - I mean ATMs and all that -

**Mr SQUIBB** - They are separate. It's EFTPOS. It's where you put a note in and get your coins.

**Mr WHITELEY** - As we all know, that is ageing technology.

**Ms FERNON** - They did make that point, that a lot of machines now you can put your \$50 notes in rather than use the cash machine.

**Mr SQUIBB** - Really? Not in pubs.

**Mrs SUE SMITH** - To get coins, you are talking about?

**Ms FERNON** - Yes, coins.

**Mr WHITELEY** - That is why they are listed separately as cash machines and EFTPOS further down.

**Ms FERNON** - The link between accessibility and problem gambling we think is a very key issue for policy makers and therefore local government. But once again we go back to the point at the moment that communities and local government have no say on either increasing or decreasing accessibility to the video gaming machines. When we were putting this submission together we had phone calls from people who were not confident enough or whatever to appear and it was interesting that a reasonable amount of those people were women talking about their accessibility and how that accessibility, where they had never ever gambled before gaming machines came into hotels and clubs. They feel very comfortable going into those areas.

**CHAIR** - Feel safe in those areas.

**Ms FERNON** - Yes, fellowship.

**Mr WHITELEY** - It is a warm, friendly environment where many sometimes find themselves at home by themselves and it is a drawing, a bit of a magnet.

**Ms FERNON** - We have also had different males, for instance, who have talked about their wives and these men as an example work on the west coast - you know, the long shifts where they are away four days a week. So this whole compounding of social conditions here leads to the fact that this accessibility we find is a major problem and encouragement. I think the Productivity Commission report gives figures about the increasing number of women who are using these gaming machines and off the top of my head it goes from something like 9 per cent beforehand to over 50 per cent.

As a council we are obviously concerned about broader community aspects and we tried our hardest to get some information about what they might be and information on these sorts of things just is not available. So instead of giving information we have put the sorts of questions that have been asked that we cannot get answers to. We feel that these are really important questions and they - in Brett's opening he said when the council has made inquiries of the Government, the answer has been - we have now released this study and it only shows that problem gambling has not increased. That's the answer. But we find that, really there are so many questions that there have not been answers to. These are about broader community impacts, let alone the costs of those impacts as we referred to before. Who can say how the growth of gambling really affects other sectors and businesses when you look as the large amount of money that comes out of the economy when we live in an area where there is not a lot of money coming in? That has to be a serious question. Then, does gambling really affect affluent and disadvantaged areas equally? Information from councils interstate, the research they have done, seems to show that it does not.

Then, once again, the real costs of gambling. Does it result in increasing crime? What are the costs to individuals and family? What are the costs to the community? I think the last one that is really important, what are the long-term costs of living in a society that condones gambling? So we have not been able to get answers to any of those questions and I think that goes back to the fact that more research is needed. We recognise the work done by the Productivity Commission. But we would definitely like to see more research at the Tasmanian regional and local levels and more qualitative research. I think the council would be very happy to participate and do anything it could to help that research happen.

**Mr WHITELEY** - Just to conclude Madam Chairman, the Burnie City Council supports the notion that gambling can be a problem without people being problem gamblers, and I do not think we should lose sight of that particular theme because it is so easy when you have data that is quickly thrown in your face that says, problem gamblers have not increased, go away we do not have a problem. I think we all know in our heart of hearts that we possess a degree of discernment that there are things going on as a result of this problem that we cannot quite measure or put our hands on. But I think that we all know when we put our head down to sleep at night that there is something happening and we need to be very much aware of that.

**Mr SQUIBB** - It has not been put to us in that light before.

**CHAIR** - No it has not.

**Mr WHITELEY** - Thank you. The estimated gambling \$5 million that leaves Burnie annually is a cause of great concern.

**Mr SQUIBB** - Can I come back to that one. At this stage, I know -

**Mr WHITELEY** - Which one?

**Mr SQUIBB** - The \$5 million. I commend you on the report and the observations that your offices have made when they have been out in the community but you based that on the \$60 million that TasCOSS indicates has been lost for the State. One twelfth of that for Burnie?

**Ms FERNON** - TasCOSS worked that out for us. He did have an old report that he was supposed to fax me which we did not get but he proportioned it. Really the region shares -

**Mr SQUIBB** - Obviously not on per capita then?

**Ms FERNON** - No, just the region by - old information that did - they themselves could not get the latest up-to-date information but ABS had published some information from a few years ago. So he used that.

**Mr SQUIBB** - So they must be saying that the per capita participation in gaming machines is much higher in Burnie than anywhere else in the State?

**Mr WHITELEY** - Yes.

**Mr SQUIBB** - So it would be interesting if we could get some information.

**Mr WHITELEY** - I think that is what they are leading to and again, I think you spoke to me for 10 minutes before we came in about the frustration even by an agency such as TasCOSS that they cannot do exactly what you are asking -

**Mr SQUIBB** - On a population basis you would have said it should be half of that.

**Mr WHITELEY** - Yes, probably not quite half, but yes that is right.

**Mrs SUE SMITH** - You draw out an interesting issue there and it has been drawn out quite often and that is the lack of consistent research and data. Somebody says let us have a committee or let us have a baseline study or whatever and there was one in 1994 and there has been another one. The latest was a Morgan research telephone poll and some people attest to the credibility of that process. We have a Community Support Levy that the gaming industry is putting money into and supporting and that Community Support Levy at the moment has \$2.5 million that has not been expended. So each year whilst it is divided into different areas of sport and recreation, charitable organisations and then research education et cetera, there still is consistently each year money left over in that process. Does the Burnie City Council have an opinion on whether or not it should be a role of a continuing research project, perhaps biannually that has the same base processes so that each couple of years you could test the process to see whether it is increasing or decreasing - and that is a possibility as things lose their novelty value in areas, et cetera - so that some of that Community Support Levy can give some of this information, hopefully, that we are seeing some frustration in communities about. Catherine, you have quite a bit of experience I know in the processes of studies and so on.

**Ms FERNON** - I think that sounds like a good idea, especially when you think of the impact that it might have on local communities and then the response that local communities would have to make to that impact as far as local government. It could be a changing thing. Obviously the trend now is for huge increases but, as you say, it could be a changing thing so I am surprised to hear that amount of money is still sitting there.

**Mrs SUE SMITH** - In fairness to both sides.

**Mr SQUIBB** - It does build up over summer.

**Mrs SUE SMITH** - Yes. You have to give both sides an opportunity and if you have a base process that is researched every two years -

**Ms FERNON** - It is also an ongoing educational process. If you have those sorts of figures, if you argue free choice, you do not have free choice unless you have all the information. It would help that ongoing educational process if you had up-to-date information. The councils could disseminate and allow for different arguments, as you say. People could see the cumulative effect.

**Cr WHITELEY** - I hate talking about the Community Levy because I see it as a guilt reliever but anyway we will talk about it - I would not suggest that we take the money out of that, Mrs Smith. I think a rolling study should take place but given the small amount that does go into the Community Levy it would be far better, I think, to pay for it out of the other actual gaming funds rather than the money that is being put aside into smaller communities as a result of the levy.

**Mr SQUIBB** - That is one of the purposes of the levy. Fifty per cent of the levy goes to education, research.

**Ms FERNON** - The owners of the machines could contribute as well.

**Cr WHITELEY** - Can I just conclude? So on the estimated \$5 million which you picked on, in a community experiencing severe economic hardship and high long-term unemployment rates, every dollar that leaves a household for no tangible return can cause hardship. The council would like to see a moratorium put on the expansion of video gaming machines in our community. The council would be willing to cooperate with any research being carried out into the social and economic impacts of VGMs on our local communities. Too many questions remain unanswered. The unavailability of specific information relating to the Burnie area and the north-west region, particularly, in relation to the true costs and benefits of increasing access to gaming machines justifies, we believe, a moratorium until the widespread concerns of the community are addressed.

**Mr SQUIBB** - Brett, you referred earlier to the deed which is attached to the act. How do you reconcile that call for a moratorium with the legal requirements of the deed?

**Cr WHITELEY** - That is a very good question. In a sense we are working where we currently find it. I suppose that leads to the big 'C' word, doesn't it - compensation. If there was to be any change that is the first thing that is going to be cried out for. I suppose we will have to leave it to wiser heads than ours to determine how they may get around that.

**Mr SQUIBB** - Can you see some opportunity post 2003? The 'as of right increase', if we can call it that, continues until next financial year. Then there is the opportunity for agreement between the Commission and the operators. Do you see any scope there?

**Cr WHITELEY** - Well, we would hope so.

**Ms FERNON** - Well that is an obvious area they have to look at - different reasons. I read that deed of agreement and there was no outline of what they would look at. They would just decide themselves on numerous criteria.

**Mr SQUIBB** - Market forces, I guess.

**Ms FERNON** - It is just market forces. So you have those decisions you have to take. More and more in Tasmania now with Tasmania Together we are told that things have to be economic, social and environmental. The three things have to be considered but also, before that, we have been told as a council, two reasons. That is: what will it do to business confidence if that deed of agreement is changed. Well, they do not have gaming machines in hotels and clubs in Western Australia and they are going all right as a State.

**Cr WHITELEY** - They have resisted the ultimate temptation.

**Ms FERNON** - It depends on the community support for changing it and there seems to be widespread community concern about it so there are a lot of factors to take into account in this sort of area.

**CHAIR** - You mentioned business, I was just wondering why - Mr Squibb is just looking something up here -

**Mr SQUIBB** - It does not necessarily mean that I want to ask another question.

**CHAIR** - I underestimated him after all. You talked about businesses and the effect of gambling being a problem in the area and its effect on local businesses and I note that you have done one small survey. I just wonder if at any stage you have been able to gauge from local business groups like chambers of commerce and so on what effects that they, as business people, are actually experiencing? What is happening out there in the business world that may - and we do not have the research so we do not know - or may not be contributing to the downturn in their industries?

**Cr WHITELEY** - I suppose that depends on whether this committee wants to hear anecdotal evidence rather than facts. We have been very careful today to not bring in too much anecdotal evidence because we can be a little bit emotive.

**CHAIR** - A bit of a snapshot would help.

**Cr WHITELEY** - I think in my role as an alderman - Catherine can speak separately - as I wander the streets regularly in discussions there seems to be - it may be mythology but I do not think so -

**CHAIR** - We have no proof one way or the other.

**Cr WHITELEY** - The business people are quite smart, they are quite discerning, they talk. As the increase in gambling grew they were of the impression that it was having an impact on their business. Not so much the major chains who sell the groceries and so on - that tends to be the first port of call after the mortgage - but the other discretionary spending areas, they have a gut feeling that that is about the only thing that they can put it down to. Again, that is anecdotal and that would be a consistent opinion.

Most people, I have to say, are not wowsers. Neither Catherine nor I are wowsers. We are not against gambling as such. What we are concerned about is the proliferation of particular gaming machines to date. The position is the same as I walk around the small-business people. A lot of them do not mind a punt and no doubt they will buy a Tattslotto ticket but they are concerned about the accessibility of these machines and the impact it is having on discretionary spending. It is anecdotal only.

**Ms FERNON** - Because of the media attention to this issue just recently a few people in business have spoken to me, but it is anecdotal. Nurseries to corner shops have said, 'Yes, it has really impacted on my business and I have noticed the difference'. Those sort of comments.

Once again, because of the research that has been done it is hard to take out all of the other factors. We have had a huge increase in unemployment and lots of redundancies and all of those things.

**Cr WHITELEY** - I should just say that most of them took place before this major increase in gaming but there is a correlation for sure.

**Ms FERNON** - It would actually be good to do some proper research into that area.

**CHAIR** - More specific research.



**Cr WHITELEY** - You can have it anecdotally. Someone said the other day you would have to ask the question why there are so many empty shops in Upper Burnie, going back to my previous illustrations of the economic situation up there and fairly large gaming venues. Again, that is a throwaway line that could come back to bite me but you could ask that question.

**Mrs SUE SMITH** - You talked about the discretionary dollar. We have to try to find a balance in this. I must say that your council has taken a different perspective and it is pleasing to see. Instead of the problem gambler, the problem of gambling to a community rather than individuals - we do have to talk about the discretionary dollar and we do have to talk about people's freedom of choice. We do have to accept that 95 per cent of us evidently do not have any problems individually and personally within their arena with gambling as such. To them it is an entertainment. Where do we draw the line between gaming as an entertainment as against your new Metro Theatre which has probably seen money transferred from another sort of entertainment because people have gone back to the movies because of the pleasant environment or away from sports into the cultural activities that are now very prominent in the civic centre and so on. Where do we get the balance on people's free choice, right to decide on their discretionary dollar and allowing that to happen while putting in some protections for those in communities who are vulnerable and we have a responsibility to assist?

**Cr WHITELEY** - Well I suppose that is the challenge of our law-makers, without trying to be flippant. I do not see too many people - although I often wonder about my own children who seem to be addicted to the cinema - I do not see too many people addicted to the cinema.

**Mr SQUIBB** - There would be worse things for them to be addicted to.

**Cr WHITELEY** - There would be. I think a lot of things in life are not black and white. You are right. We do have choices in life. We can extrapolate that to any debate that we have had and you have had some recently. At the end of the day, individuals make the laws that we are governed by and they have to search their own paths. They have to measure their own ability to discern what they feel is right and proper for a healthy community. I feel quite strongly that you cannot always just try to finish a report based on money or equality of cinema versus a gaming venue. At the end of the day you have to have a gut feeling on what is right and proper for a healthy community, what makes a healthy community. Do we want to be a community that actually condones, embraces, encourages, positively markets a false hope that comes from gaming venues? You might say, 'Brett, you're not answering it with hard-line facts'. I am not, and I do not think we can. I would ask the question, 'What damage would it do to our community if the amount of gaming machines were halved anyway?' I know that is probably not going to happen but what difference would it really make? It would make a lot of difference. At the end of the day, it has to be a decision based on what we feel and what you, as law-makers, feel after speaking with the people who are your average constituents. What is the heart of this? That probably does not answer your question, Sue.

We want to rationalise everything and we want life to be black and white and it ain't. It is far from it and I just think that we have to pick up the heart of our community and I sense - I am only one player and you may mix in different circles - the heart of what I

feel and see right across the community is that people are very concerned about this. They cannot put their finger on the solution but they are very concerned about it. They do not want to be part of a community that encourages and embraces this sort of lifestyle. They also understand that they have free choice. That is my response to your question.

**Ms FERNON** - I was just going to say that it has been an interesting experience for me working on this submission in that beforehand I could understand that free choice was not necessarily - I did not know a whole lot about it really so with what I could find I have learnt a lot. To me, that thing about 'as opposed to going to the cinema', you have to say that someone winning relies on someone losing - like a war, really.

**Mr SQUIBB** - Or a debate.

**Ms FERNON** - Yes, I think that if something like that exists we should have more information available. If more information were available to a community to make informed decisions then I think the community could make that choice or have a good input into making that choice. At the moment they do not have that choice. I think that would make that process a bit easier. At the moment that does not happen. If a community has all the information - they know where the money is coming from; they know about the cost to society; they know what sort of incomes are losing the most money - they know all those sorts of things and they make that decision; then we will know what sort of society we have. At the moment we do not know. The decision is made and it is going to be, up to 2003, made by an increasingly small body, by the look of it, which is very scary. That is the point.

**Mr SQUIBB** - Just to clarify that point on 2003. Unless the Commission and the operators can agree, the maximum number per hotel and per club remains at the 2003 level.

**Cr WHITELEY** - So that has to be a mutual arrangement?

**Mr SQUIBB** - Yes. We have heard, of course, that market forces may keep that to a certain limit anyhow.

**Cr WHITELEY** - But the thing that does concern me which we have not touched, and I need to be careful, is that for any government now to address this issue is very difficult because while we are told that the picture is rosier, a huge portion of our budget - it is not a very big budget, the city of Brisbane has a bigger budget than we do - it is just a huge amount. It is going to be a big decision for law-makers as to how to replace that. That is not what we are here to discuss. I understand that challenge for those in the realms of government.

**Mr SQUIBB** - We can discuss that because obviously if that form of donation is lost then it has to be picked up from somewhere.

**Cr WHITELEY** - I agree.

**Mr SQUIBB** - Or the community is going to have a lower standard of service.

**Cr WHITELEY** - I would say personally that I am prepared - and I do not earn a lot of money, not a lot at all at the moment - to pay more for the town good. Governments not

only have the responsibility to set budgets and make law, they have the responsibility to actually forecast vision and say to people, 'Hey, there are bigger causes at stake here and in the short term, until we can fix this problem, there will have to be a cost.' I sometimes wish that all of us could issue the challenge to our people that if you want a better community there is a cost. You do not get it for nothing. I think you would be surprised. People would be prepared, if it was sold properly, to accept that in the best interests of this community growing in a more healthy way we are prepared to pay a price. I know it is a fair price with \$60-something million just out of gaming machines.

**CHAIR** - 13 per cent of budget.

**Cr WHITELEY** - I know that is an issue but goodness gracious! Do we want to grow our community on the back of moneys that ultimately will come back and eat our communities? It is a juxtaposition. It is a worry.

**Mrs SUE SMITH** - Is that not why, perhaps, the deed was wise in the fact that from 2003 it is the Tasmanian Gaming Commission and the operators who will decide on any roll out rather than it being in a political arena? If you have a strong gaming commission which listens to and is delivered the message by the communities consistently -

**Mr SQUIBB** - And is independent.

**Mrs SUE SMITH** - that they will take note of that issue and it does stay out of that political dollar-making arena that you are expressing concerns about.

**Cr WHITELEY** - I think that is a fair point. I do not like to be a cynic but on the basis that the commission group can be independent and is prepared to take in all the things that we have alluded to today as far as local governments' opinions, the social impacts and they have the data that they would not have at the moment. They would not have a clue. If that was June to July 2002 they would not have a hope. What information would they have in front of them today that they could sit down - of what we have found, as far as the amount of information that is actually available to them, where is local governments' input? You guys are doing it, I think that is fantastic.

If they have all that, they are independent and they can make rational decisions then yes, I think that is reasonable. The cynical side of me says that there may not be a lot of difference. That decision is going to be influenced by the big players who are equally as hungry for the dollars as any State.

Maybe I should have more faith in the Gaming Commission

**Mr SQUIBB** - And also in the operators. I think there is a bit of a safeguard there, in that the more venues they go into or the greater number they put into some venues is obviously going to have an impact on existing venues. Unless there is a return - they are going to get some resistance from existing operators. So I think there is a bit of a safeguard there from that point of view.

**Cr WHITELEY** - A minimal one.

**Mr SQUIBB** - Well it has happened with TAB. Not this committee but another committee that I am on, the GBE committee, is looking at the operation of TOTE, and in fact the number of TOTE outlets has reduced considerably because it is not viable. I guess once the novelty phase of the introduction of gaming machines has passed, we may well find a roll back. It would be interesting to look at New South Wales, who of course have had them in their clubs for a long, long time, and see whether the introduction into hotels has seen a similar increase, and I guess we have got the figures somewhere. It is just that I have not had a chance yet to look at them, but it is quite possible - well, it may not be possible, but it would be interesting to see whether in fact the percentage increases for New South Wales are similar to what they are for Tasmania and the other States.

**Mr WHITELEY** - It is an interesting angle.

**Mr SQUIBB** - Having had the opportunity of listening to submissions in other parts of the State, which you would not be privy to at this point in time, I am just saying that is a point of view that was put to us.

**Ms FERNON** - I think it would also be interesting to look at Western Australia where they have only kept them in their casino. I am going from memory here and I am not good with figures and would have to check, but they still raise plenty of revenue from gaming but it comes from a different socioeconomic area.

**Mr SQUIBB** - I think we were quoted a while ago 13 per cent of budget, and Western Australia is something like 8 per cent, and the per capita amount I think is \$800 to Tasmania where it was something like four times the West Australian figure.

**Mrs SUE SMITH** - The only other question is, because you did a very on-the-ground study of the arenas that hold gaming machines, did the council staff who went out make any comments when they came back about things they could see as improvements to the process that might make them more acceptable but, considering the problems that some problem gamblers may have, may assist them too?

**Ms FERNON** - I think they were quite amazed by the promotions and things that were going on. That is something we talked about, the different promotions that happen on machines and the music and the whole sort of -

**CHAIR** - The make-up of the machines.

**Ms FERNON** - Yes, and that whole thing. I think they thought that was quite encouraging. They themselves were a bit drawn in by that. They actually could understand that.

**Mr WHITELEY** - We are actually wondering whether there might be a law suit around the corner.

**Ms FERNON** - I think they found that quite manipulative actually, so that is one thing they did mention. I think they were just quite concerned by the amount of people they saw there and people who they knew. They did not think they would be spending their money there.

**Mr SQUIBB** - Aside from that, can we see a recommendation to have music put on the parking meters?

**Mr WHITELEY** - Now there's an idea.

**Mr SQUIBB** - Just a question to Catherine if there is time. You have obviously in compiling your report looked at at least two other interstate reports. From those reports, which I know do contain some recommendations for amendments, New South Wales and Victoria in particular going through stages of amending their acts, have there been any measures that have been proposed that you feel may help to limit the problem? Things like no advertising. Note acceptors are not advertising on the actual machines in clubs and pubs in Tasmania, but that is a recommendation that is coming from the mainland because they have had note acceptors in clubs and pubs.

**Mr WHITELEY** - We haven't got them yet.

**Ms FERNON** - There were things like the amount of money you could actually put in at one time, slowing the machines down - those sorts of things. There was general feeling that they are here and it is difficult to actually take them away, but one of the reports did make a comparison to other countries and apparently in Australia we are pretty up there with speed and the amount of money you can put in compared to other countries like England and Japan. You know, it is just too easy here, and they say there are actually things that you can do on a premise so people can still go in there if that is their entertainment and still enjoy that, but it is not easy to get rid of large notes, and the machines do not work so quickly, they are slower, and things like that.

**Mr WHITELEY** - You're talking about issues like light, smoking, food, advertising. Certainly the advertising is very alluring, isn't it. Let us be honest. I think the Rev Tim Costello referred to this. He is obviously very articulate about it - the great hope. It offers this enticement to people, and we can sit around this table, all being in a certain situation of life, saying 'I don't understand how that actually could be an enticement. I'm disciplined, I'm not easily led', but we all know that our communities have people in them who are not as disciplined, are more easily led, and are looking for their financial saviour. And the last \$20 of that lady with her child is a very powerful message to me.

**Mrs SUE SMITH** - It is very interesting, whilst you have related to the issues in the lower socioeconomic areas, that much of our evidence has come from professionals, well-spoken, middle income, controlled-type of people who have been caught in this particular process, and have articulated the process very well, and that is a group that makes me think that, whilst you are looking at the low socioeconomic area and have specified one particular arena, perhaps it is a problem that is much across the board than to one specific classification of our community.

**Mr WHITELEY** - I believe it certainly is across the board, but again the data is not in. But anecdotally I would suggest they are still a smaller percentage of the total. But you are right, it goes right across. It is not prejudicial in who it draws into its lair, that's for sure.

**Mrs SUE SMITH** - And the issue of data is always going to be questionable, isn't it, because you do see a person who is an alcoholic, because you consistently see that person who is doing irrational things. The same with somebody who has a drug problem. With a

gambling problem it does not really surface in the community on many occasions until it is severe financial loss of house, income or whatever, or that they have looked through their employment positions to gather in more funds and it is a police issue or whatever. So it is very hard to tag in a community that is not always considerate that we are not going to come out and say, 'I have a gambling problem'. So data is always going to be very difficult to gather, I would imagine. Would you agree with that?

**Mr WHITELEY** - Yes.

**Ms FERNON** - Yes, and it has been interesting, your point about having a continuous process of evaluating. Just by this process the people that have responded, either by phone who did not want to come in; or those who have now volunteered to come in, that is a start. I think if these things happen and we talk about them more and we are aware of them more and see it not as a problem with the person but all other sorts of things that impact on it, and people are more willing to come in. But at the moment, as you say, it is not till the problem is very severe that you know about it.

**Mrs SUE SMITH** - We have had some discussion about marketing, that the Oasis venues market very well the process of coming to the entertainment forum. Do you have a comment to make about the marketing of the other side of the angle - marketing the education process?

**CHAIR** - Catherine touched on it earlier, yes.

**Mr WHITELEY** - I think there is nothing like a real-life story. Every now and then I do get to see a few commercials. I saw one yesterday I had not seen - a young boy with cancer, and it was one of the most powerful commercials I have ever seen. There is nothing like a real-life story to actually bring your senses alive to an issue, and I think it would be a very good move, if nothing else, to actually see some of the other stores, real-life ones. Obviously as you have travelled the State you have heard some, and you are going to hear some more today. Yesterday following a little article in the paper I put in about being here today, I went home last night and my wife said, 'What on earth is going on?' She had 12 calls yesterday, and they were all passed on to me, but 10 of which were on this issue just encouraging the council in its submission. Four, though, were stories of people and families. One in particular Catherine talked to, but another one would break your heart, and it is not too far away from us.

I do not know whether marketing the negative side would actually work. Apparently it has not helped the road toll. We have spent millions of dollars on that. I am not saying we should stop it, for goodness' sake, but it is a bit like the fox. You know, we've got a problem, what do we do? We whack it down to 50. We won't debate whether that is right or wrong, but we respond to problems. Locally, there are six minor accidents at that intersection so we want to spend \$300 000 on a roundabout. We react and we respond, and yet I do not see a lot of reacting and responding happening in this area, which, as you quite rightly said, is sometimes very hidden and hard to actually put a face on. So we have to find a way to draw out the face of this issue, and maybe negative advertising may start to bring people out of the closet a bit, I don't know. Does that make sense? No, probably not.

*Laughter.*

**Mrs SUE SMITH** - Thank you.

**CHAIR** - Thank you both very much for your submission. I do not know whether you have any final points you wish to make. Your submission is very detailed, and I am also very impressed, as other members are, that you are coming at it from a totally different angle. Gambling can be a problem without there being problem gamblers, and I think that is a very new methodology of looking at it. It has certainly given me some food for thought, and I do appreciate it.

**Mr WHITELEY** - On behalf of the Legislative Council we do appreciate the opportunity. We welcome select committees. We find it a very grassroots way of actually being able to have a say. We often feel unheard. So we thank you for your time and thanks for being in Burnie.

**Mrs SUE SMITH** - Thank you very much. We record our thanks for the Burnie City Council, to the aldermen and to the staff who have made the accommodation available today as well, if you would pass this on.

**Mr WHITELEY** - We appreciate it. Any time. Thank you.

**THE WITNESSES WITHDREW**