

From: Les Whittle <campaigns@good.do>
Sent: Thursday, 24 November 2016 11:18 AM
To: fgm
Subject: Submission to the Joint Select Committee on Future Gaming Markets

Dear Members of the Committee, i have experienced the impact of Poker Machines (electronic gaming machines – EGM) in both my personal and professional lives.

we should not be fooled to think that the current electronic machines are similar to the old styled ‘one-arm bandits’ which operated within the limitations of a relatively simple mechanical machine. It is interesting that we called them ‘bandits’, yet they were not as devious or misleading as the modern electronic machine. for example, the number of ‘near misses’ has increased with the advent of the EGM – providing a false impression of ‘near misses’.

i believe that this has a number of impacts on people using the machines – (it is difficult to say ‘people playing the machines’ – because there is no linkages to ‘games’ – there is no sporting chance and certainly there is no skill required.). ‘Near misses’ create an illusion that the User's luck was just a little off – and may change soon. Users have reported to me that they think subsequently think that 1/ their luck is close to winning; 2/ their luck is likely to change soon; 3/ their likely change of luck is actually visible; 4/the music, sounds and lights associated with a near miss add to their stress which can be addressed immediately by making the next play. (the EGM generates a stress which can – amazingly – be addressed by continuing to ‘play’ – to continue to ‘invest’ – the EGM)

there is research in Europe in programs working with people with drug addictions that breaking the addiction to EGMs is harder than breaking to addiction to illicit drugs – based mainly on the acceptability and public prevalence of EGMs.

there have been numerous reports, studies and research on the design of EGMs, their location, on marketing of EGMs and gambling in general, and the situation for Users of EGMs.

not unlike people accessing drugs (licit and illicit) or self-harming, EGM Users engage in behaviours that can be seen as complex – that is, behaviours that attempt to address certain circumstances (eg to ease pain/loneliness/provide calmness/reduce stress/provide fun) as well as generate stress/healthy risks/ and relationship stress).

I urge the committee to be mindful of the previous reports and research; to reduce the number of EGMs and allow local businesses to actually benefit.

I urge the committee to recognize the harm done to individuals, their friends and family, and to the local communities through the prevalence of EGMs in our communities. I understand that not everyone is harmed by the presence of EGMs; however the harm far outweighs the benefits.

The following material is excellent sources of relevant information

1. Monash University's 'Guideline for Screening, Assessment and Treatment in Problem Gambling 2011
2. GAMBLERS GUIDE TO CUTTING DOWN OR GIVING UP; Written by Dr John O'Connor The National Library of Australia Cataloguing in Publication; ISBN 0 7308 9197 6.
3. ABC Radio National's ‘Future Tense’ program of 15 March 2015 “A gamble on the future”

4. "Problem gambling and the criminal justice system" January 2013; Published by the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia.

NOTE: Tasmania does very little to address the impacts of problem gambling and related matters in its justice system.

1. Gambling Addiction in Australia: Highest Percentage of Gamblers in the World

July 13, 2015; <http://www.thecabinsydney.com.au/gambling-addiction-in-australia-highest-percentage-of-gamblers-in-the-world/> 6/ Difference Between Gambling Addiction & Substance Addiction <http://www.livestrong.com/article/170428-difference-between-gambling-addiction-substance-addiction/> 7/ Gambling and SUBSTANCE ABUSE/MENTAL HEALTH DISORDERS FACT SHEET; masscompulsivegambling.org 8/ How the Brain Gets Addicted to Gambling; Scientific American; Addictive drugs and gambling rewire neural circuits in similar ways; November 1, 2013; Ferris Jabr is an associate editor at Scientific American. 9/ An Operant Analysis of Gaming Machine Play; John Edward Haw March, 2000; A thesis presented to the Department of Psychology, University of Western Sydney, in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

thank you for your time

Yours sincerely, Les Whittle

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