

**Julie Thompson**

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**From:** AASW TAS <AASW.TAS@AASW.ASN.AU>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, 13 December 2016 12:00 PM  
**To:** fgm  
**Subject:** Submission Joint Select Committee on Future Gaming Markets  
**Attachments:** AASW TAS Branch Submission Joint Select Committee Future Gaming Markets.pdf

Please find attached a submission to the Joint Select Committee on Future Gaming Markets from the Tasmanian Branch of the Australian Association of Social Workers.

Kind regards

**Sandra Fox**

*BOccThy Grad Dip Lib*

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Tasmanian  
Branch

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

**December 2016**

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## Introduction

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### Who we are

The Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW) is the professional body representing more than 10,000 social workers throughout Australia including more than 300 members in Tasmania.

We set the benchmark for professional education and practice in social work and have a strong voice on matters of social inclusion, social justice, human rights and issues that impact upon the quality of life of all Australians.

### The social work profession

Many Tasmanian social workers are involved in the delivery of problem gambling services in a range of fields of practice. Social workers work within community health, counselling, family support, youth work, financial counselling, social welfare, emergency relief and legal services that provide direct assistance to problem gamblers and their families. Social workers are also engaged in gambling related policy and research.

## Submission

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### Comments on the Terms of Reference

#### a) Gambling industry, location, type and number of poker machines

Tasmanians lost \$113.8 million on poker machines in clubs and pubs in 2014-15<sup>1</sup> with total gaming expenditure in Tasmania exceeding \$270 million. This is an enormous loss of resources for Tasmanian families, children and communities.

Social workers see firsthand the harmful impact of the gambling industry on the Tasmanian community.

In 1999<sup>2</sup> and 2010<sup>3</sup> the Productivity Commission reported that

- most problem gambling relates to electronic gambling machines (EGMs)
- approximately one third of regular EGM gamblers have a gambling problem or are at risk
- 60 per cent of EGM revenue comes from people who have a gambling problem or are at risk

Harm from problem gambling extends beyond the individual, directly impacting up to ten others including partners, children, friends, colleagues and employers. Harmful consequences include family breakdown, divorce, job losses, crime, homelessness, poverty, depression, self-harm and suicide.<sup>4</sup>

In addition to these adverse consequences for individuals and families, there are associated negative economic and social effects on local communities and regions.

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<sup>1</sup> Australian Gambling Statistics 32nd edition Summary Tables 2014–15/ Queensland Government Statistician's Office, Queensland Treasury, Aug 2016

<http://www.qgso.qld.gov.au/products/reports/aus-gambling-stats/aus-gambling-stats-32nd-edn-summary-tables.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Australian Productivity Commission (1999). Australia's Gambling Industries, Report No. 10, Canberra.

<http://www.pc.gov.au/projects/inquiry/gambling/docs/finalreport>

<sup>3</sup> Australian Productivity Commission (2010). Gambling, Report No. 50, Canberra.

<sup>4</sup> Kate Dempsey & Associates (2002). Striking a Balance: The Impact of Gaming in the City of Kingston.  
<http://www.kingston.vic.gov.au/page/>

Australian studies<sup>5 6</sup> have found that EGM losses are much higher in communities with lower incomes. Those who are already marginalised are especially vulnerable to EGM related gambling problems. In addition to low income, these vulnerabilities include mental illness, disability, new retirement, single parenthood and migrant status.

Poker machines in Tasmania are more concentrated in communities of greater socio-economic disadvantage and problem gambling in Tasmania is highest in communities of socio-economic disadvantage.

The AASW Tasmanian Branch members report the easy access to poker machines in local hotel and club venues and their sophisticated gaming programs designed to encourage repeat gambling behaviour, minimise risk and mask losing odds are issues of serious concern for consumers of gaming products. AASW Tasmania calls on the government to act to protect the safety of consumers and to act in the best interests of the health and wellbeing of vulnerable Tasmanians.

The Branch calls on the Parliament to protect Tasmanian consumers from the harmful effects of gambling activities through

- Restricting new licences for EGMs in local community pubs and clubs
- Not granting licences for new EGMs in low socioeconomic areas with high numbers of problem gamblers and where the local community opposes such installations
- Supporting hotels and clubs that currently have poker machines to transition their business model, funded by the Government's revenue received from poker machines
- Not increasing the number of poker machines in the casinos when granting future licences

#### **f) Gambling support services funded by Community Support Levy**

Tasmanian social workers work with vulnerable problem gamblers in many settings and offer counselling, support and advocacy.

A significant number of gambling support service activities are delivered around Tasmania each year, highlighting the demand and prevalence of problem gambling behaviour.

In 2011 clients seeking help from gambling support services were found to be older, married, to have experienced harm from problem gambling behaviours for more than 12 months before accessing help, to have been referred by a family member or friend, and have problem gambling behaviour linked to EGM's operating in their local community.<sup>7</sup>

Areas of concern to social workers in the delivery of support services funded through the Community Support Levy include:

- Community awareness of problem gambling support services and information
- Lack of access to local support services in rural and remote areas

<sup>5</sup> Australian Productivity Commission (1999). Op. cit

<sup>6</sup> Livingstone, C., Kipsaina, C. & Rintoul, A. (2012). Assessment of poker machine expenditure and community benefit claims in selected Commonwealth Electoral Divisions. Retrieved 22 August 2012 from [http://www.unitingcare.org.au/images/stories/resources/120412\\_research\\_poker\\_machine\\_expenditure\\_and\\_community\\_benefit.pdf](http://www.unitingcare.org.au/images/stories/resources/120412_research_poker_machine_expenditure_and_community_benefit.pdf).

<sup>7</sup> Social and Economic Impact Study of Gambling in Tasmania. Final Report to the Tasmanian Government Department of Treasury and Finance November 2011 [http://www.treasury.tas.gov.au/domino/dtfdtfdt.nsf/lookupfiles/volume1secondgamblingseis.pdf/\\$file/volume1secondgamblingseis.pdf](http://www.treasury.tas.gov.au/domino/dtfdtfdt.nsf/lookupfiles/volume1secondgamblingseis.pdf/$file/volume1secondgamblingseis.pdf)

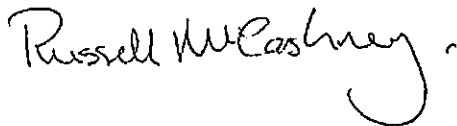
- Delay in problem gamblers seeking help including after referral
- Lack of community knowledge of gaming machine design and payout odds which can result in problem gambling behaviour
- Community attitudes to gambling addiction leading to shame and reluctance to access services

The Branch calls upon the Tasmanian Government to implement the following recommendations:

#### **Harm minimisation strategies**

- Address the significant risk of harm posed to problem gamblers by EGMs by reducing maximum bets to \$1 per play
- A system that requires individuals to set an enforceable limit on their losses on EGMs
- Requirement of gambling licences that venues identify people exhibiting gambling problems and intervene appropriately
- Monitoring by state government of sports betting and online gambling for harm to consumers
- Continue to fund and implement gambling support services including services to remote communities, and community awareness and education programs
- Fund research on the effectiveness and efficiency of support services

Submitted for and on behalf of the Australian Association of Social Workers Ltd



Russell McCashney

Tasmanian Branch President





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