



Submission to the Joint Select Committee on Future Gaming Markets

The Secretary, Joint Select Committee on Future Gaming Markets
 Legislative Council
 Parliament House
 Hobart 7000
 Phone: 6212 2250
 Email: fgm@parliament.tas.gov.au

07/12/2016

Dear Secretary - Joint Select Committee on Future Gaming Markets,

RE: Submission to the Joint Select Committee on Future Gaming Markets

Scripture Union Tasmania Inc (SU Tas) is an Interdenominational Christian organisation that has worked in Tasmania for over fifty years through camps, missions, outdoor programs, resources and school chaplaincy services. We currently provide school chaplains to 85 Tasmanian Schools, who offer self-esteem programs, pastoral support, breakfast programs, individual student support, grief counselling, and mentoring.

Our school chaplains and other staff encounter thousands of Tasmanian children from all sectors of the community. They offer emotional and spiritual support to children aged 4-18 years who are dealing with difficult life circumstances, often involving breakdowns in family relationships. The school chaplaincy program has been recognised as a valuable service to the state's young people, families, and school communities.

We find that children and young people in Tasmania face challenges such as family alcohol and drug addictions, violence, mental illness, relationship breakdown, unemployment and poverty, other addictions such as gambling, and financial difficulties. Many live in families in which no adult is working and some find it difficult to envision for themselves any better future. In disadvantaged communities, it is common to find multiple outlets offering poker machine gambling, such as the eight venues clustered in Devonport or the nine in Glenorchy. Poker machines drain money out of families, out of these communities and away from local businesses.

The hardship caused by poker machine gambling is felt most acutely by the families of the more than 2,500 Tasmanians who are problem gamblers. They suffer severe financial problems, which we have found affects their ability to afford basic necessities such as bread and milk, and pay for basic healthcare. But families of problem gamblers also suffer from a breakdown in family relationships, loss of trust, grief, anger, shame, anxiety and lack of stability. Even younger children, though they may not understand exactly what the problem is, are well aware that something has gone wrong in their family.

The study *Children at risk of developing problem gambling*, done by the Problem Gambling Research and Treatment Centre in 2010, has shown that children of problem gamblers are more likely to become addicted to gambling themselves. Other studies show that they are more likely to suffer depression and other mental health issues (*Offspring of parents with gambling problems:*

Adjustment problems an explanatory mechanisms, Vitaro et al., 2008). Many practitioners believe that their situation is very similar to that of children of alcoholics and other drug users (*Effects of gambling on the family*, Velleman et al., 2012).

One family that came into contact with SU Tas reported that their mother could not drive past the local pokies venue without going in to gamble away the family's money. This left the children without food and basic necessities. They would often attend school without food in their lunch boxes and having had no breakfast. They could not afford new school shoes and clothes when they wore out; all because of a gambling addiction that was controlling this family's lives.

This is the suffering that poker machines cause to children. We believe that there are too many poker machines in the community and they are too easy to access. This is why SU Tas joined a coalition of organisations, Community Voice on Pokies Reform.

The welfare of Tasmanians would be improved by removing poker machines from pubs and clubs and confining them to casinos and we urge the Tasmanian Parliament to do this to protect our children.

We would welcome the opportunity to present in person to the Committee.

Yours Sincerely,



Ruth Pinkerton

CEO SU Tasmania

For and on behalf of the Council of SU Tasmania Inc.

Julie Thompson

From: Ruth Pinkerton <ruth.pinkerton@sutas.org.au>
Sent: Wednesday, 7 December 2016 4:50 PM
To: fgm
Subject: Submission to the Joint Select Committee on Future Gaming Markets
Attachments: SU Tasmania submission to fgm.pdf

Please find attached the submission from SU Tasmania.

Sincerely,

Ruth

Ruth Pinkerton
CEO SU Tas
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