

**From:** info@mrtasmania.org  
**Sent:** Friday, 9 December 2016 1:30 PM  
**To:** fgm  
**Subject:** Submission to the Joint Select Committee Inquiry into Future Gaming Markets  
**Attachments:** Submission Pokies Reform 20161206.pdf; MR Tas Brochure Original - White.pdf

Dear Secretary

Please find attached our submission on Future Gaming Markets  
regards

Jonathan Bedloe

President  
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[www.mrtasmania.org](http://www.mrtasmania.org)

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## Submission to the Joint Select Committee Inquiry into Future Gaming Markets

**Men's Resources Tasmania Inc.** is a community based, not-for-profit organisation that supports and promotes the wellbeing of men and boys in Tasmania. We contribute a male voice to community conversations and public sector policy, particularly around social, health and wellbeing issues relevant to men. We operate primarily through volunteer involvement, with some support from member organisations. Please find more information about MRT in the attached flyer.

We currently have around twenty individual members and six organisational members, along with over one hundred associate members from across the wider community.

Men's Resources Tasmania (MRT) calls on the Tasmanian Government to:

1. Remove poker machines from hotels and clubs in Tasmania.
2. Not increase the number of poker machines in the casinos and to impose on the machines in the casinos a maximum \$1 bet limit and a system that requires people to set an enforceable limit on their losses. Further, for it to be mandatory for staff to intervene where customers may be experiencing harm from poker machines.
3. Continue counseling and other support services for those harmed by gambling.
4. Support hotels and clubs that currently have poker machines to transition their business model.

MRT is a participating member of the Community Voice on Pokies Reform, and also supports their submission to this inquiry.

We believe the above requests are a legitimate call for change, and urge government to take the above action for the following reasons:

- The impacts of gambling on increases to family violence.
- The impacts of gambling in child safety.
- The impacts of gambling to suicidal ideation and suicide.
- The impacts of gambling on community wellbeing.

The detrimental affects of gambling addiction including increased risk of family violence by people addicted to gambling as demonstrated by Markham, Doran and Young (2016).<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0277953616302891>



The Tasmanian Governments current efforts to improve child safety and wellbeing provide reason for removing poker machines from local clubs and hotels. Child health and wellbeing requires the whole community to play a role and take responsibility. The Tasmanian Government is asking the wider community and for community and health services to take greater responsibility for the broader welfare of our children, and to not be too focused on our immediate area of work or involvement. It is up to the Government who have the task of setting the law and governing on behalf of the whole community, to play its role, and to guard the future of young Tasmanians, and to prevent the damage done to families by poker machines.

Various reports and programs have demonstrated recently the addictive nature of poker machines, and how they are programmed to addict people; to give the illusion of winning even when they are losing; and to keep people engaged in the machine and distracted from their surroundings. It is up to government to act on behalf of the people and to protect the community from harms.

As an organisation working to support men and boys in particular, we want to point out the study by Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation<sup>2</sup> that shows Men gamble more often, with more money and are at greater risk of developing gambling problems than women. Men rarely rate special mention in these sorts of discussions. In gender analyses of various issues, men are often seen as perpetrators rather than victims. We believe men are entitled to consideration, support and understanding of the negative impacts they specifically experience.

The links between suicide and poker machine use appear to be strong. A Victorian Study released in 2010 states:

- Results highlighted that 27.06% of problem gamblers and 6.07% of moderate risk gamblers considered taking their own life in the past year and respectively, 15.17% and 3.46% said their gambling led them to do something that is technically against the law.<sup>3</sup>
- Another more recent study also found similar rates of suicide contemplation. This suicidal ideation is across both genders, and is important no matter what gender. With men accounting for 75% of suicides, this is why MRT wishes to highlight this issue. Suicide is such a significant issue for men, with so little reduction in numbers despite decades of effort from governments, a new approach needs to be taken. Reducing the impacts of harmful devices and activities such as poker machines in the community is well worth doing.
- 400 suicides per year are attributed to gambling in Australia<sup>4</sup>.

That last statistic is unacceptable. We as a community cannot allow a few people to profit from addictive poker machines. As a community we cannot allow our Government to rely on taxes taken from the gambling industry to fund other activities.

Applying the Victorian research to the Tasmanian context suggests that 27% of problem gamblers(2500) in Tasmania equates to 625 people contemplating suicide as a result of problem gambling.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.responsiblegambling.vic.gov.au/newsroom/media-releases/2014/gender-gap-highlighted-in-new-gambling-study>

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.responsiblegambling.vic.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0013/4027/A-study-of-gambling-in-Victoria-PRINT-Sept-10.pdf](https://www.responsiblegambling.vic.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0013/4027/A-study-of-gambling-in-Victoria-PRINT-Sept-10.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.pokiesplayyou.org.au/the\\_damage\\_done](http://www.pokiesplayyou.org.au/the_damage_done)

Some further information about suicide in Tasmania:

- 78% of known suicides in Tasmania in 2015 were by men and boys
- The economic cost of suicide by males in Tasmania is estimated to be \$402 Million<sup>5</sup>

We have written here about the links between suicide and poker machine use. It is not hard to also see the correlation and potential impact of poker machine use and family violence or other criminal activities.

Removing poker machines from local community pubs and clubs can potentially assist some families to avoid the many and varied issues that poker machines can create. Supporting local families to avoid financial difficulty through poker machine use and addiction is not only good for them, but also good for the wider community. Money currently spent in poker machines, and funneled to the owners of the venue – which only accounts for 6% of the spend, to government (20% of the spend approximately) and ultimately the owners of the machines could be better spent.

That money could be spend at the same local venues but on food, or in other local entertainment venues such as café's, music and arts events, outdoor recreation activities, sport for children and the local grocery shops. This would be providing more money for spending in the local economy and community, used for health giving activities rather than gambling.

We would like to have been able to provide a more comprehensive and finely tuned report. As an unfunded community organisation with no paid staff our time and capacity is very limited. We hope however that the Committee deeply considers the points made in this paper, and makes favourable recommendations to benefit the whole community.

We urge strong and courageous action by the Tasmanian Government to stand up for the needs and clearly articulated desires of the broader Tasmanian community, to see the removal of poker machines from local clubs, pubs and hotels.

Thanks for your consideration.



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Jonathan Bedloe

Chair  
Men's Resources Tasmania

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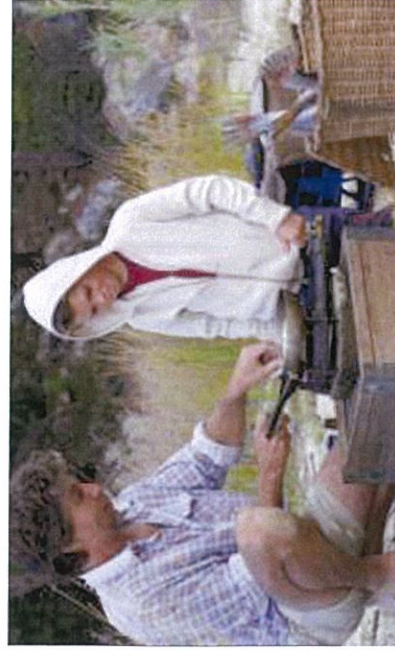
<sup>5</sup> <https://stopmalesuicide.com/2016/06/09/australias-gender-suicide-gap/>



## How can you get involved?

To continue our important work, MRT welcomes corporate and individual contributions in any of the following ways:

- become a financial member (visit <http://www.mrtasmania.org/memberships.html>)
- sponsor the reprinting of the Bloke's Book (men's health information and contacts)
- join the Board and help us to continue to grow
- sponsor an event
- provide in-kind assistance
- sponsor MRT to help us continue to grow and extend the health and wellbeing of men and boys in our community.



Men's Resources Tasmania is a community based, for purpose (NFP) organisation that supports and promotes the wellbeing of men and boys in Tasmania. We contribute a male voice to community conversations and public sector policy, particularly around social, health and wellbeing issues relevant to men. We operate primarily through volunteer involvement, with some support from member organisations.

## What do we do?

We are focused on the following activities:

- delivering men's health presentations to organisations and groups within Tasmania
- creating a point of contact for resources and referral for men and boys
- contributing a positive male perspective to government and community sector policy and program development
- promoting positive, healthy stories of masculinity in our community.

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# Men's Resources Tasmania



**Support for men  
and boys**  
[www.mrtasmania.org](http://www.mrtasmania.org)





## Why men's health?

- ☒ nationally, males account for three quarters of completed suicides (and rates have risen in recent years)
- ☒ males have a shorter life expectancy, higher rates of death from most non-gender specific causes across all age groups, and a higher lifetime risk of many cancers and chronic conditions
- ☒ males account for 93% of all work-related fatalities, and over 70% of all work related injury



## About Men's Resources Tasmania

Incorporated in 2014, Men's Resources Tasmania (MRT) previously operated for over seven years as an informal network of men and women from Tasmanian health and community sector organisations who were interested in working together to improve support for men.

During that time, the network met up to four times each year, contributed submissions to government policy discussions, ran several Men's Health Week events and promoted men's health and wellbeing information and resources across the community sector.

Since 2014, MRT has expanded its membership, established a website, delivered presentations and consultations, held public events and contributed public submissions to

policy consultations. We have also continued to share current research, news

and other information and resources with the community sector, to enable continued improvement of opportunities for men and boys.

MRT is here to raise awareness of social, health and wellbeing issues affecting men and boys. While many men are well connected, supported and successful in most areas of their lives, some men experience significant challenges—as single parents, through redundancy or unemployment, illness, relationship breakdown or any number of other situations. Of course, men who appear to be highly successful also experience periods of challenge.

All men are entitled to quality support to help them deal with whatever challenges they face in life. MRT wants to help build bridges between men and boys and the services that can support them. With this goal in mind, MRT advocates to government and the community sector for improved services for men.

[www.mrtasmania.org](http://www.mrtasmania.org)

### Get in touch

Please contact us to find out more about how we can work together to improve the health and wellbeing of men and boys in Tasmania.

Tel: **0429 581 095**

Email: [info@mrtasmania.org](mailto:info@mrtasmania.org)

