

**Julie Thompson**

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**From:** linley grant <mgr70303@bigpond.net.au>  
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**To:** fgm  
**Subject:** Submission to the Inquiry F GAMBLING M in Tasmania  
**Attachments:** GAMBLING submission NCWT 2016.doc

The Secretary  
Joint Select Committee on Future Gaming Markets Legislative Council  
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Dear Secretary,

Please find attached a submission from The National Council of Women of Tasmania Inc. into the Inquiry into Future Gambling Markets in Tasmania.

Linley Grant OAM  
PRESIDENT NCWT

**SUBMISSION TO THE INQUIRY BY THE JOINT SELECT INQUIRY INTO FUTURE GAMBLING MARKETS IN TASMANIA, BY THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF WOMEN OF TASMANIA INC;**  
9/11/'16 – by Linley Grant OAM, President, Sally McGushin Hon. Secretary and Dorothy Kelly, Hon. Treasurer.

The National Council of Women of Tasmania Inc. (NCWT) was established in 1899 to serve women and their families. NCWT consists of delegates from the affiliated organisations as well as individual members; it is a self-funded, voluntary organization. NCWT has been greatly concerned at the increase in addictive gambling in the Tasmania and with it the insidious destruction of family life since the widespread release, outside Tasmania's casinos, of poker machines into hotels and clubs, particularly those in vulnerable communities.

NCWT is concerned to address the first, second and sixth of the Terms of Reference of the Inquiry of the Joint Select Inquiry Into Future Gaming Markets in Tasmania ; our members agreed that, even though we are only aware of the 'tip of the iceberg,' and although our members have not conducted research in relation to problem gambling on poker machines, our experience equates closely with comments made by Andrew Wilkie MP and 'The Cabin' and quoted on Google.

NCWT has noted that –

1. According to various surveys, Australians are the world's most addicted gamblers, with over 80% of citizens engaged in gambling activities and with over 300,000 Australians currently addicted to gambling and many others at risk. (1)
2. Gambling, particularly on poker machines (*and now, online gambling*), not only destroys the lives of the addicted, but those of their families and friends as well; and, seriously affects the lives and financial security of the wider Tasmanian and Australian community. Meanwhile, existing regulation of poker machines is inadequate.
3. Gambling is a serious addiction; it poses an insidious assault on the lives of the addicted, their families and on the community life of our state and nation. Our members consider that companies involved in promoting gambling in their marketing strategies often target those at highest risk of becoming addicted. We have first-hand evidence of otherwise productive members of our community whose lives, and those of their stable, long-respected families, have been decimated by gambling on poker machines, none of whom have been involved at all previously, in other forms of gambling.
4. The closer the gambling venue is to their homes, the more likely gambling addicts are to frequent the venue and play the poker machines. As well as their addiction, gamblers also frequent gambling venues to eat cheaply, keep warm in winter, cool in summer and to enjoy vicarious company. This is in itself enticing, without the built-in addiction of the poker machines. There is the continual, added hope of paying off debts by winning on the poker machines, but the machine odds are weighted against this. The need to reduce the number of venues in which the machines are located and the number of poker machines available, seems particularly important in areas of high unemployment and average low incomes.
5. The taxes which gambling raises for the Government are insignificant in terms of the harm caused to the wider community. And the monies raised to assist addicts seems totally inadequate. Having used the financial resources of their family and friends, addicts often

resort to crime to fuel their addiction. This increases the cost of the justice system for the remainder of the community.

6. Currently in Australia, only 15% of gambling addicts seek help. Shame, guilt and lack of rehabilitation options, keep addicts from seeking help. Research has shown that pathological brain changes occur with addiction which results in lying, denial, irrational thinking and frequently, criminal behaviour to support the addiction. Families and friends often hide in shame, their need for help and think they can solve the addiction, without success. We are aware that an Australian was sentenced to five years jail for stealing approximately \$200,000. Prosecutors noted his serious lack of remorse. Timely help is expensive and frequently unavailable when needed before the addiction is noticed by others; its provision imposes a further cost on the community(2) .

7. It would seem that the location of poker machines in Tasmania actively targets low income areas where a number of problem gamblers live, and machines are programmed to cause addiction. (3).

8. Gambling addiction also frequently, co-occurs with alcoholism and drug abuse. Anecdotal evidence also suggests that some gamblers, addicted to poker machines, engage in illegal drug trafficking to support their addiction. Almost a quarter of those arrested in Australia for drug trafficking have a serious gambling problem, which includes gambling on poker machines. Drug sellers actively seek indebted gambling addicts and recruit them into drug trafficking roles such as growing marijuana and transporting drugs (4).

9. Gambling addiction is a form of 'process' addiction, which usually requires professional treatment, as willpower alone is not enough to reverse the changes that occur in the brain. Rehabilitation is costly and time consuming for the addict. The provision of adequate rehabilitation services imposes another financial burden on the community (5).

Members of the National Council of Women of Tasmania Inc., (NCWT) were aware of addiction and seriously concerned when the poker machines were restricted to Tasmania's two casinos; members have become even more worried ever since poker machines were installed in pubs and clubs outside Tasmania's casinos. We are directly aware of the effects on the community of gambling addicts in families which have been self-sustaining and sound members of the community for generations. We are also aware of the continuing, destructive cost of addiction on the wider community of the families, particularly the children of addicts, who have been reduced to living in poverty.

At present, NCWT considers that the 'playing field' is not sufficiently equal regarding the number and placement of poker machines throughout the state. A bureaucrat within the Government makes the decision. Local Councils have no control over the number and placement of the machines in their locality; they should have a role in the decision. If Local Councils wish to object, they must undertake expensive litigation. Obviously Local Councils and ratepayers cannot afford to challenge all decisions, especially when companies which own the machines employ lobbyists and have the financial backing to fight a case in court. Similarly, if individuals wish to object, they are constrained by prohibitive legal costs, so the proponent wins by default.

The gambling addicts of whom we are aware, have destroyed family relationships and lives, leading to divorce, misery and poverty of partners and children. The addicts have forced the sale of homes, loss of superannuation and retirement savings, not only of their immediate family, but

of parents and grandparents, in order to help addicts to pay gambling debts. Retired family members, who should have had a comfortable retirement, have had to rely on the age pension for support. Besides tax-payers having to support the addict and his or her immediate family, support of the extended family is a further drain on tax-payers as a whole. Our members consider that this situation has increased significantly since the Government allowed poker machines to be installed in venues outside casinos. For example, Glenorchy is home to 270 of Tasmania's 3500 poker machines and gamblers there lose over \$20 million each year. Gambling is now readily accessible, particularly where machines have been installed in hotels and clubs in suburbs with low employment rates and low average incomes, and in rural townships where lack of industry is a problem.

Some politicians have consistently opposed gambling on poker machines; they want improved regulations on gambling throughout Australia. However, NCWT considers that national change for better control is far too slow and even more difficult to achieve. NCWT considers that this destructive, billion dollar industry should be controlled in Tasmania for the benefit of the entire community.

The National Council of Women of Tasmania Inc. therefore supports the recommendations listed in The First Report May 2011 (5), and requests that the Joint Select Inquiry recommend to the Tasmanian Government, that it –

- create a more level 'playing field' with regard to the number and placement of poker machines in Tasmania, by legislating, firstly to reduce the number of poker machines in all premises where they have been established, including casinos; that is, reduce the total number of poker machines in Tasmania, especially in areas of average, low incomes;
- legislate to create a body, independent of Government, to arbitrate the number and placement of poker machines. Also, to hear objections to the placement and number of poker machines in an area by reducing legal fees for Local Councils, established groups, or individuals, to allow them to object and challenge the decision, or in the final analysis, to take the matter to Court;
- require all venues, including casinos, where poker machines are available, to contribute to the Tasmanian Government's Community Support Levy to assist in adequate rehabilitation of addicted poker machine gamblers; the levy to be reviewed annually in line with the CPI;
- reduce all poker machines to low-intensity machines regulated to a \$1 maximum bet;
- cause the owners of poker machines to have them reprogrammed so that the odds on winning are fair and the causes of addiction are minimized;
- regulate the location of finance organisations, such as "*Pay-day Loans*," to prevent the deliberate exploitation of poker machine addicts from being able to easily access further funds and drain their financial resources to feed the poker machines;
- introduce a policy similar to that pertaining to the responsible serving of alcohol, to make the licensee responsible for excluding those persons who have been playing the poker machines too long and too often; or, legislate to restrict gamblers to a time limit during which they are able to gamble on poker machines in this state;

- increase supervision of Venue Operated Exclusion to ensure that excluded gamblers are actually prevented from using poker machines.

Linley Grant  
9/11/2016

#### REFERENCES

1. Andrew Wilkie, the Mercury – on Google
2. The Cabin, Sydney, Gambling Addiction in Australia. 13 July 2015 – on Google
3. Ibid
4. Ibid
5. Ibid
6. Parliamentary Joint Select Committee on Gambling Reform, 13 May 2011, ISBN 978-1-74229-441-4