

The Secretary, Joint Select Committee on Future Gaming Markets
Legislative Council
Parliament House
Hobart Tas 7000

10 November 2016

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

Youth, Family and Community Connections Inc.(YFCC) is a community service organisation that provides crisis and transitional accommodation, drug and alcohol services, family support, employment programs and youth services across the North West, West Coast and King Island regions. We have been established for 38 years and have experience working with people in one of the most disadvantaged regions of Tasmania.

Tasmania's North West ranks consistently poorly in terms of health, employment and other signifiers of socio-economic disadvantage. We are less likely to have completed Year 12, less likely to be employed, more likely to be disabled, more likely to be on welfare, and more likely to live in public housing.

Every day YFCC encounters Tasmanians who struggle with day-to-day living expenses, who suffer poor mental health, who live chaotic, disrupted lives, and who see very little hope for the future. The problems in our region are well known and not easily solved, but we are hopeful that with work from government and the community we can bring about positive changes to the North West.

However, when we walk through Devonport we find no fewer than 230 poker machines, for a town of 30,000 people – nearly one poker machine for every ninety adults, one of the highest rates in Tasmania. Between Wynyard and Latrobe there are 23 places where you can gamble on poker machines. People are using these machines; people are losing money at these machines. They are members of our community spending money which is then lost out of our community, and more importantly lost out of families and vulnerable individuals..

Up to a third of regular poker machine gamblers are harmed by their gambling. They find gambling an easy, seductive pastime. Many believe they can 'beat the machine', or that their luck will eventually turn, but poker machines are designed to win and take the maximum of money with a minimum of returns. They are the most harmful and most addictive form of gambling, allowing for fast, intense, non-stop play that induces a sense of dissociation and offers an escape from your problems in very much the same way as alcohol or drugs.

In our work we see too many broken families, damaged relationships, personal suffering and financial struggles. Some of this is caused by physical or mental ill health, unemployment, poverty and substance abuse- some of it is caused or exacerbated by poker machines.

We have worked directly with families where poker machine addiction has led to such significant debt that the family have lost all assets, and have suffered irreparable family breakdown as a result.

Poker machines have no place in a vulnerable community where many people struggle to find a place to live and enough to eat. We believe that poker machines should be confined to casinos, where they are less accessible. It benefits no one except the owners and manufacturers to have them in a pub on every street.

Addiction is not recreation!

We joined the coalition of organisations lobbying for the removal of poker machines from our hotels and clubs because we believe the harm they cause cannot be solved by tinkering with the odd harm minimisation measure here and there. We would appreciate being able to speak direct with the Committee. Perhaps you could consider holding a hearing in Devonport and we would invite members of our community to discuss their concerns with you.

Yours sincerely



Ros Atkinson

Chief Executive Officer

Julie Thompson

From: Ros Atkinson <Ros@yfcc.com.au>
Sent: Thursday, 10 November 2016 5:40 PM
To: fgm
Subject: Submission to the Joint Select Committee on Future Gaming Markets
Attachments: Submission on Future Gaming Markets.docx

Dear Sir/Madam

Please find attached Youth, Family and Community Connection Inc.'s Submission to the Joint Select Committee on Future Gaming Markets.

Kind regards,

Ros Atkinson LLB

Chief Executive Officer

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Supporting Youth, Families and Communities Towards a Better Future



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