

## **QUEENSLAND CLUB INDUSTRY PERSPECTIVE OF PROPOSED FEDERAL LEGISLATION ON GAMING...**

### **WHAT'S NOT AT ISSUE**

Introducing effective and practical legislation that will assist problem gamblers overcome their addiction.

### **WHAT IS THE ISSUE?**

Introducing a cost prohibitive national data base of all individuals wishing to play gaming machines in Australia without the slightest shred of evidence that this will prevent, or reduce problem gambling, or assist problem gamblers in any positive way.

### **PERSPECTIVE OF THE PROBLEM**

The 2008/09 Queensland Household Gambling Survey conducted by the State Government ascertained that 0.37% of adult population in Queensland are problem gamblers. The previous survey conducted in 2006/07 found this percentage to be 0.47%. This represents a decline of over 20% in this state in that two year period and suggests that policies being pursued in Queensland to reduce the instance of problem gambling are working.

### **WHAT IS BEING PROPOSED**

Andrew Wilkie has proposed that all Australians who wish to play a gaming machine must obtain a licence to gamble which will involve having a card containing the individual's person details and a daily limit to be set by them in respect to the maximum daily amount that they wish to be restricted to in playing gaming machines.

### **WHAT'S WRONG WITH THAT**

- A person with a gambling addiction should not gamble ever, full stop. Whether it is on gaming machines, horse racing, black jack, roulette, or whatever. To expect them to set any limit, let alone one that is realistic, is irresponsible in itself as it would be akin to saying to an alcoholic, "It's ok to drink, you just need to set your own limit on the number of drinks you want to have each day".
- Even if a small amount was set by a person with a gambling problem this would not prevent them accessing the myriad of forms of other gambling options available, particularly via the Internet which is completely uncontrolled. The only country yet to implement mandatory pre-commitment has been Norway where they found that problem gambling increased from 1.3% to 2.1% after its introduction.
- The technology does not presently exist which can link every poker machine currently in Australia into a national data base to monitor and record every player's gaming activity. The cost will be prohibitive to upgrade gaming machines to do this, develop the platform for the monitoring system, and provide the enormous capacity and ongoing maintenance of the data base created.
- The implementation cost of introducing and maintaining this proposal, and the resulting negative impact on clubs' income (an independent Deutsche Bank report predicts a 30 to 40 per cent decline), will see job losses and a significant dilution in the important roles that community 'not for profit' clubs play in our society.

## WHAT ARE THE ALTERNATIVES

In Queensland, the State Government and the club industry have long been looking at ways and means to continue to reduce the incidence of problem gambling in this state. To date this has included for example;

- Responsible service of gaming training of club staff.
- Enforcing self exclusion of problem gamblers.
- Conspicuously placed 'in your face' warning advertisements in all club venues.
- Working with independent gambling help services in providing counselling to those seeking assistance with problem gambling issues.
- Education in the community and schools to increase community knowledge and awareness of the impacts of gambling.

## ARE THERE ANY BENEFITS TO THE CONCEPT OF PRE-COMMITMENT

Yes we believe so and in fact, after an initial trial period by the industry a few years ago the Queensland Government approved on the 6<sup>th</sup> May 2009 the roll out of a system we refer to as voluntary pre-commitment.

This system is not unlike that proposed by Mr Wilkie in that it allows a player to set a daily limit on the amount that he or she wished to gamble with. The important difference from the Wilkie proposal is that it is venue based (i.e. operates solely within the membership base of each club) and of course is voluntary for each member to decide whether they wish to utilise this facility or not. This system is already working in Queensland clubs now.

We do not suggest that this system will reduce or stop problem gambling for the same reasons mandatory pre-commitment will not address that issue, but we do believe this is a valuable cost effective tool that allows the recreational gambler to self regulate and take responsibility for how much of their money they wish to expend on gaming.

## CONCLUSION

The proposed legislation is a political deal not a genuine attempt to develop effective and practical harm minimisation solutions for problem gamblers and their families. It is an unproven, extreme proposal that could actually result in an increase in problem gambling, and will threaten the invaluable contributions made by 'not for profit' community clubs in Australia and the jobs of the many thousands they employ.

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