

Submission: Future of Gaming in Tasmania: stage two public consultation, July 2021

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Of the 68 submissions, 48 came from hotels and four from industry groups and allies. The overwhelming majority of these were (as one could expect) self-serving and attempted to put their industry in a good light – with little success.

Assessment of previous submissions:

- A total of 68 submissions
- Hotels, 48.
- Industry groups, 4
- Individuals, 6
- MPs, 3 (2 state, 1 federal)
- Civil society groups, 7 (Anglicare, Communities Tasmania, Alliance for Gambling Reform and Uniting Church Australia, Local Government Association of Tasmania, Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania, Glenorchy City Council and TasCOSS.)

Hotels:

The high number of submissions from hotels is to be expected, and at first glance looks impressive. **But**, when looked at in detail, we find that over half are from four groups:

1. **Kalis Hospitality**, representing: Beachfront Bicheno (no. 29), Black Buffalo (no. 30), Kings Meadows Hotel (no. 31), Kingston Hotel (no. 32), Beltana Hotel (no. 33), Cooley's Hotel (no. 34), and Mornington Inn (no. 35).

All seven of these submissions were identical. They all submitted that gaming licences should be in perpetuity, rather than for the proposed 20 years, and that new regulations should not restrict adoption of new technologies. They also want current EGM limits increasing from 30 lines to 50 lines.

These all appear to be in their self-interest, which is rather what you would expect when dealing with organisations that want to profit from preying largely on less advantaged community members.

2. **Ten virtually identical** submissions from **The Vantage Group**: The Derwent Tavern (no. 38), Elwick Hotel (no. 39), Hotel Federal (no. 40), Mackey's Royal Hotel (no. 41), Claremont Hotel (no. 42), Furner's Hotel (no. 43), Hotel Tasmania (no. 44), Waterfront Hotel (no. 45), Hotel Valern (no. 46) and Molly Malones (no. 47).
3. **The Goodstone Group**, (no. 50) representing: The Alexander Hotel (no. 48), The Argosy (no. 49), Bridge Hotel (no. 51), Formby Hotel (no. 52), Neptune Grand Hotel (no. 53), River Arms Hotel (no. 54), The Lighthouse (no. 55), Seabrook Hotel (no. 56) and Somerset Hotel (no. 57).

Ten identical submissions, each of 17 pages.

4. The fourth group is not self-identified as such, but the five submissions are all signed by the same individual! These are from: The Exeter Hotel (no. 13), Black Stallion Hotel (no. 15), Commercial Hotel Launceston (no. 16), Sunny Hill Tavern (no. 17) and the All Year Round Tavern (no. 23).

Glenorchy City Council (no. 67)

I fully support the GCC's call to remove poker machines from Glenorchy.

The Glenorchy City Council has been at the forefront of community concerns regarding poker machines and their effects upon Glenorchy's economy and society for several years. Some of the main features from their submission:

- Lower than average university education (2%) than that of Greater Hobart (5%),
- One of the lowest SEIFA indices of disadvantage in Australia (915), with three suburbs even lower (863%, 837% and 832%). Compared with the Greater Hobart figure of 982%.
- Eight poker machine venues in Glenorchy, totalling 240 machines. (Allowing for Glenorchy RSL closure).
- Total of \$20,113,917 literally ripped out of the pockets of Glenorchy families by these machines in 2014-2015.
- In that financial year Glenorchy organisations only received \$30,480 out of the total \$80,000 estimated to have been collected from poker machines in Glenorchy for the CSL.
- Businesses in Glenorchy overstate the effects of the removal of poker machines from their businesses. [Ref. James Boyce '*Losing Streak: How Tasmania was Gamed by the Gambling Industry*': Pokies reduced employment in hotels. Average 3.2 people employed for every million dollars spent on pokies, compared with 8.3 people for every million dollars spent on liquor and 20 people for every million spent on meals and food.(p. 135)]
- About 3.9% of gamblers are 'problem' gamblers in Glenorchy. This has a flow on effect to family and friends. [Several years ago an acquaintance borrowed money from me to cover the cost of repairs to his car. A few days more he requested more, which I gave him on condition it was repaid in full on a specific date. When this was not forthcoming, I phoned his home. His wife answered the phone and told me she'd kicked him out because he had a chronic gambling problem. Hard lesson learned!]
- Average annual loss on poker machines in Glenorchy is \$5000, for 1,380 problem gamblers. This is money that is not spent on food and clothing for families, to the detriment of legitimate businesses.
- Surveys indicate that Glenorchy residents consider that there are (a) too many poker machines, 89.23%; (b) too many poker machine venues, 87.69%; and (c) poker machines have a negative effect, 79.92%.

TasCOSS (no. 68)

I support the TasCOSS submission. If these pernicious machines are not removed from clubs and pubs, then there must be:

- Mandatory pre-commitment,
- Maximum one dollar (\$1) bets,
- Slower spin rates, and
- 'Review Responsible Gambling Mandatory Code of Practice to mandate staff to intervene where they see gambling harm occurring.'

Local Government Association of Tasmania (LGAT) (no. 65)

I note that ALGWA supports the position of individual councils, including that of Glenorchy!

Anglicare Tasmania (no. 11)

In his cover letter to the Anglicare submission, Dr Chris Jones states:

‘Poker machines are the cause of the vast majority of harm to our clients and research participants. ... Anglicare continues to see people in our services and through our research who say the [poker machine gambling] industry has failed to protect them as consumers.

‘ ... poker machines are a dangerous product. ... ’

As one would expect of Anglicare, their submission is thoroughly researched, and their conclusions deserve government support. Their no. 1 recommendation is that **‘Poker machines should be removed from pubs and clubs’**.

I fully support that recommendation, given the damage done to the social fabric and community economy of Glenorchy.

Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania [NHT] (no. 66)

This submission from NHT identifies several problem issues attributed to, or exacerbated by, poker machines: Family violence – mental health – social isolation – alcohol and drug issues – health and wellbeing – financial challenges and literacy – and unemployment.

Several of these issues have major ramifications for Tasmania’ state budget – **particularly health and education.**

Alliance for Gambling Reform and the Uniting Church in Australia (no. 25)

This submission also calls for the removal of poker machines from pubs and clubs post 2023, and their confinement to casinos. I fully support this call.

Other submissions

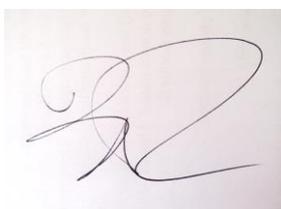
Several other submissions: James Boyce (no. 4), Ross Lincoln (no. 26), The Hon Meg Webb MLC (no. 27), Mr Andrew Wilkie MHR (no.59) and Madeleine Ogilvy MP (no. 8) all make important contributions and (whilst not wishing to appear immodest) I’d like to draw attention to my own contribution.

Summary

The majority of submissions from the poker machines industry are, as one would expect, self-serving and trying without much success to put their industry in a good light.

Contrast this with the submissions from what I term civil society, our political representatives, and individuals. These call for, at the very minimum, steps to reduce the harm inflicted on individuals and the wider community by poker machines. Others go further, calling for the removal of clubs and pubs.

I repeat my call from my previous submission for poker machines to be removed from clubs and pubs. To do anything less is a dereliction of our duty of care to the disadvantaged and vulnerable members of our community.



Bob Holderness-Roddam