

Gambling Submission

From Tailrace Community Church and the social enterprise known as Tailrace Centre, Judes Café and Kids Paradise.

Our work with sport chaplaincy and hospitality over the past 12 months have resulted in us having major concerns with the gambling industry.

We are working towards improving the mental health of young people.

Gambling is impacting youth mental health.

1. We are seeing gambling contribute to the deterioration of youth mental health. Our sport chaplains are reporting a growing number of young people being impacted by gambling debt. One young lad had accumulated a \$40,000 gambling debt. One team were subject to a severe bullying message through social media from a gambler who had lost money on their game. We believe strongly that it is going to require much more than a Beyond Blue social campaign to alter mental ill-health amongst young people, and we see strong ties to gambling addiction. Statistics show that if someone has a serious gambling issue, they are 15 times more likely to suicide than someone who doesn't gamble.

<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2019/mar/13/problem-gamblers-at-15-times-higher-risk-of-suicide-study-finds>

2. At the sporting club that we provide a chaplaincy service, 1 in 4 young men have accessed our service in a meaningful way over the past 12 months. In a recent survey we also discovered that 1 in 4 players are gambling regularly. This is not surprising considering gambling related issues are the second most common reason that players have sought our help through out chaplaincy service (behind only mental health).

The role of the gaming hospitality industry on young people and gambling.

3. Sporting sponsorship deals and end-of-season events positioned within the gambling hospitality industry means our young people are groomed from a very young age to gamble. We see many groups including primary school aged children attend end of season sporting events at gambling establishments and thus introducing them to a gambling environment from an early age. Is it any wonder they grow up thinking gambling is okay? Isn't this a form of grooming?

If a brothel was positioned within hospitality parents at least would question if it was a form of grooming. Australia has a blind spot to gambling, much like America has a blind spot to gun law, we often fail to connect how sponsoring, and the provision of events is a form of grooming young people towards gambling.

Many sporting groups feel that they cannot utilize other more child appropriate venues because of sponsorship deals, not understanding that hospitality venues associated with gambling have to give back to the community and that the sponsorship isn't always from a benevolent heart.

4. Gambling hospitality venues also promote their beneficiary role to sporting clubs. We think it's unethical that sporting clubs don't realise that gambling industry are required to give back under the Gambling Support Program, and we think the amounts given back are far too low considering the cost to community of problem gambling. As we understand it, for each dollar of gross profits from electronic gaming machines, 4 cents go to the Gambling Support Program payments which is broken down as follows:

1 cent goes to charity,
1 cent to sports groups
2 cents to support groups.

5. One of the major contributors to mental health amongst young people is uncertainty around the economic future and their employment. Tasmania's youth unemployment is now at 17%. <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-06-25/australia-talks-youth-mental-health-analysis/100223316> and <https://www.upskilled.edu.au/skillstalk/youth-unemployment-australia>.

Hospitality is a wonderful industry for young people to find employment. However, hospitality will never be a robust industry whilst it is linked to gambling.

- a) The public will never be aware of the true cost of food whilst gambling hospitality venues undercut pricing. For example, a \$8 parmigiana subsidized by gambling doesn't educate the public on the true cost.
- b) The implication of pricing disparity is the public will never understand the cost of staffing; food; training.
- c) Without right pricing it means that the process of training, recruiting and shutting the back door on the industry will almost be impossible.
- d) We know hospitality workers have higher incidence of mental ill-health. Research shows that 65% of hospitality workers have had a mental health issue in the past 12 months. <https://bestpractice.biz/68-of-hospitality-retail-staff-report-poor-mental-health/>
- e) There are multiple reasons for this:
 - Low paid industry
 - Long hours
 - Hours of work not conducive for family life or social life
 - Lack of skills and training

This will never change whilst undercutting of pricing occurs. Until the playing field within hospitality can become level, employers will have poor retention of quality staff, will be under resourced to provide adequate training, and the high staff turnover rates will continue.

Our young people are paying a big mental health price. There are systemic causes gambling and hospitality will never be what it could be.

Community Support Levy

5. We would like to see some of the resources derived via the community support levy being directed towards sports chaplaincy. We cannot on the one hand express concern around youth mental health, whilst ignoring systemic causes of mental ill health and then not provide relational support.

Overall Concerns we have:

- Australia suffers the most significant per capita gambling losses in the world.
- Australians gamble away \$25 billion every year (more than what's spent on alcohol, tobacco, and illegal drugs combined).
- Australia is home to 76% of the world's pub and club poker machines.
- In Tasmania, gamblers lose over half a million dollars every day on pokies. More than one Tasmanian is voluntarily or compulsorily banned from gambling premises every day.

- For the period July to December, profit from pokies in Tas was \$103 million. This was up \$13 mil or 15% on the previous year last year. It was up 50% in the same period in 2016!
- Over the last ten years, Tasmanians have lost \$1.8 billion on pokies at the rate of about \$180mil pa.
- In 2015, 41% of all regular sports bettors - 234,000 adults - experienced one or more gambling-related problems. That is, their gambling behaviour caused or put them at risk of harm
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Sports betting advertising is at saturation levels. Our media and sporting associations have become reliant on their income. Not only that, but our governments are as addicted to gambling income as the pensioner feeding a machine in some lonely suburban club, all the while being plied with 'free' drinks and discounted food.

S O'Neill

Kind Regards
Sharon O'Neill
Tailrace Community
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