

Submission 9 to Fifth SEIS Ms Margie Law

1. All submissions will be treated as public unless you wish it to be treated as confidential. Please indicate your preference:

My submission can be made public

2. What impact do you think gambling has on the Tasmanian community - the benefits and the costs?

Gambling only benefits the owners of the gambling product. Some participants/consumers enjoy gambling but this is in an environment where there is little else for them to do. If it was purely for entertainment then there should be no concerns in reducing the potential hourly loss to the consumer. It is unlikely most people who gamble are aware of how much money they spend. In particular, if they have a partner or family, their loved ones are unlikely to be aware until it is too late.

While gambling is legal, like drinking alcohol and smoking cigarettes, it requires strong leadership in consumer protection. We can have safe pokies and limited number of venues or we should have no pokies. We should have zero tolerance to a product being deliberately designed to addict.

3. What impact do you think gambling has on other Tasmanian industries and the economy?

Non-gambling businesses suffer because of gambling-businesses. No one comes to Tasmania to gamble - it is not a tourist attraction. It is fellow Tasmanians gambling in Tasmania. They are using the money they could be spending in other Tasmanian businesses. Some argue that it is the individual's right to gamble, which it is, but the gambling businesses have been given, for free, an unfair advantage over the non-gambling businesses. The value of a gambling business automatically increases because it has a gambling license, especially if it is a pokies license. This allows them to offer more at their venue than other businesses.

Rather than each venue needing to be independently assessed against criteria that includes the impact on other businesses and the local community, it is one company - Federal Hotels - that has decided where all the pokies are in Tasmania.

Federal Hotels has also had access to all the pokies data through their Network Gaming business, so it is no surprise that Federal Hotels has bought up a number of the most profitable pokies venues.

The State Government's plan to just roll the licenses over to existing businesses from 2023 will continue this inequity in the business community. Existing venues have already made plenty of profit from having pokies. If we are to continue having pokies in community sites, all businesses should have the right to apply and the decision should be made by the Gaming Commission through the Community Interest Test.

4. What's your view on Tasmania's current gambling harm minimisation measures? What further measures do you think should be considered?

Current consumer protection for the pokies is insufficient. At the current rate of spin and bet limit it is possible to lose \$600 per hour. This is the equivalent of speeding in your car - the person is going too fast to pay attention to what they are doing. Each button push should be a decision made as each button push costs money. This is easy to change - by introducing a \$1 bet limit, slowing the spin speed and increasing the Return to Player, all of which have been suggested to the State Government over many years, including by the body it is supposed to seek policy advice from - the Tasmanian Gaming Commission.

Further, although the industry claims they do not have losses disguised as wins or near misses, I invite the SEIS consultants to sit together at a machine and pay attention to when there are sounds, when the lights are flashing, when for example a wizard waves his wand: we do have losses disguised as wins and near misses. We need to legislate against these.

As for Keno, while there are significantly fewer people addicted to this product, it has been deliberately designed to mislead the user through its presentation of "hot" and "cold" numbers. Unless the selection of numbers is rigged, there can be no hot or cold numbers. This "feature" should be removed.

Strengthening consumer protection should be the choice of citizens and the government, not the industry. All changes in the history of consumer protection are fought by the industry affected but in reality industry always accommodates stronger consumer protection - because they have to.

5. What's your view on whether gambling venues adhere to responsible gambling practices?

The only place a person can become addicted to gambling on a poker machine is in a pokies venue. The majority of people who are harmed by gambling - at low, moderate and problem levels - are harmed by pokies but by far the majority of "problem gamblers" are using pokies. The only place they can use a poker machine is in a venue. This makes it very clear that venues are failing in their responsibility to protect people from harm.

If the government does not introduce compulsory "player cards" that set betting limits for using a poker machine, they should enforce the checking of ID so that, at a minimum, people who are excluded are prevented from entry.

I invite the SEIS consultants to go in to a venue unannounced and observe - venues are not set up to monitor pokies use or the wellbeing of the consumer.

6. What impact did the COVID-19 lockdown have on the gambling participation of either yourself or friends/family/work colleagues?

7. What impact did the lifting of COVID-19 restrictions on gaming venues have on the gambling participation of either yourself or friends/family/work colleagues?

8. Any other matters you wish to raise or general comments you wish to make?

Pokies cause harm to citizens and benefit only the businesses who own the venues with them.