



Tasmanian Council of Social Service Inc.

Submission to the Social and Economic Impact Study of Gambling in Tasmania

September 2017



**INTEGRITY
COMPASSION
INFLUENCE**

About TasCOSS

TasCOSS is the peak body for the community services sector in Tasmania. Our membership includes individuals and organisations active in the provision of community services to low income, vulnerable and disadvantaged Tasmanians. TasCOSS represents the interests of its members and their clients to government, regulators, the media and the public. Through our advocacy and policy development, we draw attention to the causes of poverty and disadvantage, and promote the adoption of effective solutions to address these issues.

Please direct any enquiries about this submission to:

Kym Goodes

CEO

Ph. 03 6169 9500

Email: Kym@tascoss.org.au

Submission to the First Review of the Responsible Gambling Mandatory Code of Practice for Tasmania

Introduction

TasCOSS welcomes the opportunity to provide input into the Social and Economic Impact Study of gambling in Tasmania. We also appreciate the recent opportunity to speak in person with ACIL Allen Consulting. In this submission we wish to draw your attention to the research we mentioned by Associate Professor Samantha Thomas into children's exposure to gambling - and electronic gaming machines in particular - which we believe is relevant to your investigation of harms. We have also attached:

- our answers to the written questions in the SEIS Discussion Guide;
- the graphs showing expenditure on gambling presented at that interview; and
- our submission to the Review of the Review of the Responsible Gambling Mandatory Code of Practice.

Issues of concern

Samantha Thomas and her colleagues conducted research into whether children's visual and auditory exposure to electronic gaming machines (EGMs) in community clubs contributed to their attitudes towards these potentially harmful gambling products. They found the following:

- Despite policies that try to prevent children's exposure to EGMs in venues, children recalled having seen EGMs in clubs, including where they were located, what they looked like and the sounds they made;
- children also retained information about behaviours associated with gambling on EGMs, most prominently why adults gamble on these machines;
- some older children's attitudes were positively reinforced by the perception that profits from the machines went to local sporting teams; and
- some children expressed a desire to use EGMs when they were older.¹

In another piece of research that investigated factors that influence children's gambling intentions more broadly, Associate Professor Thomas and colleagues found that popularity of products, and early and repeat exposure to advertising, "has been shown to have a significant influence on children's long-term, and risky consumption behaviours of harmful products such as alcohol and tobacco... there is no reason to expect that the consumption

¹ A. Bestman, S. Thomas, M. Randle and H. Pitt, "Children's attitudes towards Electronic Gambling Machines: an exploratory qualitative study of children who attend community clubs", *Harm reduction journal*, vol. 14 (1) 2017.

trajectory for the heavily advertised sports betting would be any different to products such as alcohol or tobacco”.² (TasCOSS would add this also applies to EGMs.)

The research also found that marketing for sports betting had the most influence on young people’s current and future intentions to gamble. Drawing on findings from other areas of public health (tobacco and alcohol advertising), the researchers made the point that “marketing which reinforces [the activity] as a fun, social activity is likely to reinforce children’s normative assumptions about [that activity].” In their research, many children and young people did indeed see gambling as ‘a socially acceptable behaviour... that was “easy” and “fun”’.³

In light of these findings, Associate Professor Thomas and her colleagues recommended that more effective strategies are needed to prevent children from being exposed to marketing strategies that have high recall or appeal for young people, and from being exposed to EGMs in community and other venues. Given what we know about the range and extent of harms caused by use of EGMs, TasCOSS would urge more be done to prevent successive generations from developing problems with use of harmful gambling products, of which EGMs are particularly injurious. We are yet to see the longer-term impacts on a generation of young people who have grown up with pervasive online and television (sports) betting, and would encourage the Tasmanian government to invest research into this important area.

² H. Pitt, SL Thomas, A. Bestman, M. Daube, J. Derevensky, Factors that influence children’s gambling attitudes and consumption intentions: lessons for gambling harm prevention research, policies and advocacy strategies, *Harm Reduction Journal*, vol. 14 (1) 2017.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 10