

THANK YOU CHAMBERMAN, MURRAY REV NICE

Opening Address to the Nile Inquiry

Thank you for the opportunity to present the harm minimisation efforts of the Club and to you today.

ClubsNSW believes that gambling is an enjoyable pursuit for millions of Australians and has been for decades. The industry provides significant social and economic benefits in terms of community support and engagement, entertainment, employment, taxation revenue and sporting infrastructure and community organisations.

ClubsNSW has also always recognised that for a small minority of people, excessive gambling causes harm, for themselves, their families, the NSW community and clubs.

Clubs have worked cooperatively with both Labor and Coalition Governments as well as regulators for many years to implement proven, cost effective harm minimisation policies. ClubsNSW believes a suite of prevention, intervention and treatment measures tailored to respond ~~specific~~ to the circumstances of the individual problem gambler is the most effective way of addressing the harms from problem gambling. The efficacy of this approach is borne out by the fact that New South Wales has the ~~lowest problem gambling prevalence rate of anywhere in the country.~~ A very low problem gambling prevalence rate.

Not all harm minimisation measures are the result of government intervention, and clubs have trialled and initiated many policies to the benefit of members and the community.

We believe that as a result of these ongoing, industry-led reforms, NSW clubs are now world's best practice when it comes to the responsible provision of gambling. There are four initiatives that prove this assertion which I would like to outline to the Committee.

1. Online, multi-venue self exclusion

Problem gambling counsellors have advised that since self-exclusion was introduced 13 years ago, it has become the single most effective tool that venues can provide to problem gamblers – in conjunction to face-to-face counselling. To strengthen this approach, ClubsNSW developed a web-based multi-venue self exclusion system, designed to assist people with a gambling problem to self exclude from up to 25 venues. This allows most participants to achieve the coverage necessary for where they live, work and socialise.

Problem gamblers no longer have to visit each club they wish to self-exclude from. In fact, they now don't have to visit a club at all – they can see a gambling counsellor and self-exclude from multiple venues without ever having to enter a club. Of course, the option to self-exclude from multiple venues in one application at their local club does remain, if they prefer.

What this means for clubs is that they no longer rely on blurry, printed photographs, sometimes in black + white, of self-excludees. This is a sophisticated, web-based system which makes it easier to identify if a self-excludee is tempted to breach their self-ban and re-enter the restricted club area.

The system also helps ensure all stakeholders involved in assisting the self-excludees to meet their abstinence goals are made aware of any detected breaches through a sophisticated reporting capability. If there is a counsellor involved, they will be alerted to any breach attempt and can follow-up with their client to explore if further assistance is required. The system encourages vigilance and collaboration.

The committee should be aware that ClubsNSW is now looking to roll this system out to every hotel in the State and expect that process to be complete by the end of the year. Eventually, we hope to

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include every club and pub in Australia, which will be particularly beneficial for NSW residents who live along State borders.

~~Strengthening Self Exclusion~~

In addition to online, multi venue self exclusion, ClubsNSW has for many years advocated for further measures to enhance self-exclusion. These measures include jackpot forfeiture, where the self-excludee agrees to forfeit any jackpot they might win to the Responsible Gambling Fund. That measure would substantially reduce any temptation or desire to gamble in breach of their self-exclusion. We also support a process of family intervention, which would allow concerned family members to raise the alarm with a club if they believe their loved one has a gambling problem.

2. ClubSAFE and ClubSAFE Premium

ClubsNSW also provides ClubSAFE, the NSW club movement's responsible conduct of gambling program. It is administered by ClubsNSW and is designed to help registered clubs actively manage their responsible gambling operations, to surpass legislative requirements and community expectations.

ClubsNSW employs five people in our ClubSAFE program, including two fully qualified counsellors.

In recent times we have also launched ClubSAFE Premium, for clubs seeking a more comprehensive suite of programs. It provides advanced employee training for management and staff working in a gambling environment, audit and compliance best practice, patron information and tailored policy advice.

3. Club chaplaincy

Following an immensely successful trial on the NSW Central Coast at the iconic Mingara Club, ClubsNSW has entered a partnership with the Salvation Army to offer chaplaincy services in clubs. The Salvos have long-recognised the role clubs play as the centre of Australian communities and the club chaplain provides a supportive and understanding presence for many club members and staff in troubled times. Whether because of the death of a loved one, relationship problems, drug or alcohol issues, depression, mental illness or loneliness, the club chaplain is there to minister to the club population and the greater community the club support.

In our view, Club Chaplaincy is the most significant initiative for preventing problem gambling undertaken by the club movement. For the first time an industry-led assistance program is addressing the underlying issues that lead to problematic gambling behaviour. By recognising those causes, pastoral care will help prevent people from developing a gambling problem before it starts.

I am pleased to report a further nine clubs are now actively investigating participation in this program and we expect many more clubs to engage a chaplain or share an on-site counsellor in the years ahead.

4. Funding research

ClubsNSW is also working towards a deal with a major university to fund ongoing, independent research into problem gambling, harm minimisation and treatment options.

Conclusion

ClubsNSW does not support the introduction of untested, one-size-fits all restrictions around the provision of gaming when the vast majority of its adult residents enjoy gambling without difficulties.

We firmly believe that problem gambling is a complex issue which afflicts people through different causal pathways, and requires targeted solutions that best address the individual's own needs. We therefore support a holistic approach which promotes a culture of responsible gambling while increasing the help-seeking rate among problem gamblers as the best way of reducing the rate of of problem gambling.

And we are spending time and money developing and implementing our own, Australian-specific, harm minimisation measures. These measures are evidence of a cultural shift in the club industry, to address and redress the harms experienced by the small group of people who have a destructive relationship with gambling. On the basis of comparisons with practice world-wide, we and many international gambling academics, believe these measures make NSW clubs the most responsible gambling providers anywhere in the world.

I am happy to take your questions.