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The Coordinating Officer
Local Impact Assessment Review
Liquor & Gaming NSW
GPO BOX 7060
SYDNEY NSW 2001

Re: ACL Submission - Local Impact Assessment of Gaming Machines Review

The Australian Christian Lobby (ACL) is pleased to provide a submission to Liquor & Gaming NSW with regard to the Local Impact Assessment of gaming machines Review.

Gambling addiction is a serious problem for thousands of Australians, impoverishing vulnerable people and in many cases destroying families. There is a strong need for reasonable regulatory controls and genuine community conversation.

According to reports in 2010 by the Productivity Commission and in 2011 by the Parliamentary Joint Select Committee on Gambling Reform, there are:

- 115,000 problem gamblers in Australia
- 280,000 further gamblers at “moderate risk” of developing a gambling problem
- 95,000 poker machine problem gamblers
- 95,000 further poker machine gamblers “at risk” of developing a gambling problem
- 600,000 weekly users of poker machines
- Total losses of \$11.9 billion through poker machines
- Losses of \$5 billion each year from 95,000 poker machine users (Thus, 15% of poker machine users account for 40% of losses)
- The Commission also reported that high intensity poker machines can result in losses of \$1,500 per hour.

Pokie machines are a major source of damage to our community. ACL is open to supporting any measures which improve the regulation of pokie machines and reduce the impact of gambling on the community. ACL is a member of the Alliance for Gambling Reform.

Uncertainty resulting from the expansion of Local Government Areas

ACL notes the discussion papers mention of the increase in size of Local Government Areas (LGAs) resulting from council amalgamations in NSW. The discussion paper rightly highlights the impact of this development on the number of gaming machine entitlements (GMEs) in each LGA, thereby substantially increasing the number of

GMEs in some LGAs. Given the increased size of some LGAs, ACL submits that LGAs may no longer be an appropriate way to measure the impact of GMEs on a local community. Consideration should be given to adopting the ACT model of a radius approach to measure harm resulting from GME locations.

Regional caps on gaming machine numbers

ACL supports the introduction of regional caps on GMEs into NSW regulations. Each community is different and regional caps are one way to address the challenges faced by different communities. A one size fits all approach to the location of GMEs may no longer be appropriate. Different communities have different services available and different socio-economic makeups. Such local community factors should be taken into consideration when licensing GMEs.

Community consultation

ACL supports the introduction of enhanced community consultation with stakeholders. Local gambling support services and charities are on the front line helping those with gambling addiction. Local support services should be included in the conversation when businesses seek to vary GMEs.

Contributions towards the community made under the Local Impact Assessment scheme

The Local Impact Assessment (LIA) scheme allows the Authority to approve a Class 1 LIA if it is satisfied that, among other things, the proposed threshold increase will provide a positive contribution towards the local community. ACL believes it would be a positive step to change this arrangement and to instead require that ongoing community contribution of GMEs be demonstrated before approval is given.

Thank you for considering the issues raised in this submission.

Regards,



Mark Makowiecki
NSW Director
Australian Christian Lobby

About the Australian Christian Lobby

ACL's vision is to see Christian principles and ethics influencing the way we are governed, do business, and relate to each other as a community. ACL seeks to see a compassionate, just and moral society through having the public contributions of the Christian faith reflected in the political life of the nation.

With more than 80,000 supporters, ACL facilitates professional engagement and dialogue between the Christian constituency and government, allowing the voice of Christians to be heard in the public square. ACL is neither party-partisan nor denominationally aligned. ACL representatives bring a Christian perspective to policy makers in Federal, State and Territory Parliaments.