

16 September 2008

Elton Humphery
Secretary – Senate Community Affairs Committee
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Mr Humphery,

Re: Question on notice – Blaszczyński-Nower Report

During our presentation to the Senate Community Affairs Committee on 12 September 2008, we indicated that we would respond to a question on notice in relation to the cost of the Blaszczyński-Nower Report tabled on the day. A copy of the report is attached for convenience.

A short answer to this question is \$16,374.33. We are happy to provide copies of invoices from Blaszczyński & Associates; and from Dr Lia Nower, on request.

However, we believe that further discussion of the reasons behind our commissioning of the report are warranted. Accordingly, below is a short discussion of what we believe to be relevant points.

Summary:

We first became aware of Charles Livingstone and Richard Woolley through reading their article "Risky Business", which (as I recall) was tabled at the Committee hearing last week by another witness and a copy of which is attached for convenience. The article was, in my opinion, heavily biased against gambling and the professions associated with gambling – and is discussed further below.

The same authors were commissioned at a rumoured six-digit cost to South Australia's taxpayers by the Independent Gambling Authority ("IGA") to provide a research report entitled "The Relevance and Role of Gaming Machine Games and Game Features on the Play of Problem Gamblers" (the "IGA Research Report"). The report was made available on 20 February 2008 for the IGA's Game Approval Guidelines inquiry, a public hearing for which took place in Adelaide on 29 April 2008. We found this research report to be equally biased against gambling – and, given the nature of its academic approach, its complexity, its length (186 pages) and the fact that little time was available to assess the report in detail, we determined to seek expert assistance as further outlined below.

The Blaszczynski-Nower Report concluded that "the Report fails to adequately address or answer any of the research questions that were the subject of this inquiry". It is our view that the IGA Research Report is invalid and provides a compelling case for the establishment of a new national ongoing research body with participation from operators, from manufacturers and related private sector businesses; from community and counselling sectors; and from regulatory authorities.

All matters related to research should be published – including reasons for development of the research agenda, project definition, selection criteria, research methodologies, qualifications and experience of parties conducting research, peer review reports, stakeholder consultation, the cost of each research project and to whom such payments are made, among other matters.

It is our view that only gambling research coordinated and overseen by the national body should be admissible to regulatory and other government bodies in any jurisdiction.

I trust the above information is useful for the Committee's deliberations. I would be pleased to provide further information or discussion wherever appropriate and can be contacted on 0418 686 075 or at rferrar@gamingta.com.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ross Ferrar', enclosed within a circular scribble.

Ross Ferrar
Chief Executive Officer