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Committee Secretary
House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs
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CANBERRA ACT 2600

VIA EMAIL: spla.reps@aph.gov.au

Inquiry into age verification for online wagering and online pornography

Dear Committee Secretary

The Salvation Army is pleased to make a brief submission to the *Inquiry into age verification for online wagering and online pornography (the Inquiry)* conducted by the Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs (**the Committee**).

The Salvation Army is an international Christian movement with a strong presence in Australia. Our vision is to confront hardship and injustice by living, loving and fighting alongside others to transform Australia one life at a time, with the love of Jesus.

The Salvation Army holds the view that:

1. Gambling is an exploitative practice that should not be a means of income generation.¹ Gambling often preys on the most vulnerable people. It is not merely a harmless activity but can become a compulsive dependency.²
2. Pornography can have significant impacts on adolescent development. A 2017 Research Report by the Australian Institute of Family Studies (**AIFS**) found evidence that using pornography was associated with perpetrating sexual violence and violence against women.³

Consistent with these principles, The Salvation Army strongly supports current laws that restrict people under the age of 18 from accessing online wagering or online pornography.

¹ The Salvation Army International Positional Statement, *Gambling* (2012) accessed at https://s3.amazonaws.com/cache.salvationarmy.org/e9ce2248-e635-4490-967e-f8b0a821c391_English+Gambling+IPS.pdf.

² Ibid.

³ Quadara, Antonia, El-Murr, Alissar and Latham, Joe, *The effects of pornography on children and young people* (2017) accessed at https://aifs.gov.au/sites/default/files/publication-documents/rr_the_effects_of_pornography_on_children_and_young_people_1.pdf.

However, due to the nature of the online environment, it is also clear that these laws can be circumvented – either intentionally or unintentionally. Indeed AIFS has estimated that 44 per cent of children aged 9-16 had encountered sexual images in the last month.⁴

In relation to gambling, research conducted in Australia in 2011 found that 76 per cent of 10-14 years old, and 64 per cent of 15-17 year olds, had gambled at least once in the past year.⁵ Studies have shown that gambling during adolescence dramatically increases a person's likelihood of developing a gambling dependency.⁶

Given the potential detrimental impacts of online wagering and online pornography, The Salvation Army supports the Inquiry and believes there are considerable benefits to improving the age verification requirements in order to access online wagering and online pornography. Improved age verification requirements for online wagering and online pornography can serve as a further barrier to children accessing websites that can be detrimental to their health and lead to addictive behaviours.

The Salvation Army understands that improving age verification requirements for online wagering and online pornography may lead consumers of these products to use unregulated or illegal websites. Further regulation may also allow parents and carers to form the false belief that their children cannot access a wagering or pornographic website.

The Salvation Army supports the work of the Committee in conducting the Inquiry. We look forward to the Committee publishing their report and recommendations and working with the government to limit the harms caused by online wagering and pornography.

Please feel free to contact me at [REDACTED] or on [REDACTED] if you wish to further discuss this submission.

Yours sincerely

[REDACTED]

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The Salvation Army Australia

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⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Purdie, Nola, Matters, Gabrielle, Hillman, Kylie, Murphy, Martin, Ozolins, Clare and Millwood, Pam, *Gambling and Young People in Australia* (2011) accessed at <https://research.acer.edu.au/policy_analysis_misc/13/>.

⁶ Hardoon, Karen and Derevensky, Jeffrey, *Child and Adolescent Gambling Behavior: Current Knowledge* (2002) accessed at <<http://youthgambling.mcgill.ca/en/PDF/Publications/2003-1999/Child%20and%20Adolescent%20Gambling%20Behavior%20-%20Current%20Knowledge%202002.pdf>>.