

A) Online poker in Australia is a hobby for many, a recreational activity where people can relax, sit back and enjoy hours of playing poker with minimal costs. People who play online poker are spread over a broad range as the game does not cater to one type of personality; the game itself is made up of numerous personalities, which makes the game even more enjoyable. The thing with online poker is it's convenient, flexible and can be played at a very little cost to the person. What also attracts people to online poker is its not gambling in the traditional sense. You are not wagering against a rigged system, you are playing against other people in which you would buy in for an amount (e.g. \$5) and be able to play for hours without having to invest more money then be rewarded depending on your finishing place. People don't want to waste money on a rigged system designed to take their money, they want to be able to come home from working hard and be able to have the freedom to play a tournament of online poker. It's a form of recreational for many, and a fun one at that. As for myself, I work fulltime in a management role, sometimes even more hours overtime if need be and I live 40minutes outside . For me, online poker is just a better option for both budgeting money & convenience. I don't have time to travel into the city to play poker, and I know many people feel the same way & online poker provided a way to enjoy the game I like that suits my own lifestyle. This is a contributing factor as to why there is a fairly large Australian poker player base. Many people are in remote places and aren't able to play a game of poker anywhere. Online poker offers this convenience because the world is in a digital age now. Everything is online, from shopping to connecting on social media, to paying bills etc. It makes the most sense for online poker to be very popular because of the current environment of being online.

B) It is critical to first differentiate online poker from the traditional forms of gambling. Online Poker is not a rigged system, it does not favour 'the house', it is a peer to peer game where people buy in for a pre-determined amount of money and are able to enjoy hours of playing, and are rewarded for how well they perform. Online poker has **not** had a negative effect on me, it has been a positive experience where I can analyse my own abilities and continually improve my skills. I use the word skill because the game isn't pure luck. Of course, there is an element of luck as inevitably the cards will determine the outcome, but it's the situations players get in that can heavily favour them. For example; a player could have the worst hand in the game, beatable by anything but still win the hand because of the way they played the hand and convinced their opponent they were ahead of them. This is not luck but a skill which many players work on to achieve the best results.

Poker is a social game, even online. There are communities that are formed, where players discuss hands they have played, there are also forums etc. Regardless of how you view social interactions, online poker is not a dark cave as people may believe.

I also play poker because I like to be in as much control as I can in a situation, where I can develop and improve, not succumb to a rigged system. Some people I know who have

gambled in the traditional sense have played slot machines and regretted it, because they are guaranteed to lose, or eventually lose. I have often said slot machines are pointless because as soon as you press a button you're already down. But poker itself is different. Poker, you aren't down, you are in a game. You buy in for a certain \$ amount, and the aim is to win, but you can be rewarded for finishing in higher places, as the prize pool is not just for one person, but distributed percentage wise depending on your finishing places.

I find online poker to be cheap, affordable and a great way to budget entertainment. You can buy in for \$11 tournament, play for 5 hours and win decent amounts without having to continually invest money. One might make the argument 'what happens if you lose straight away'. Well that's where the skill and prize structure play apart. The more skilful you are the better median result you will have. You could finish 150th out of 1500 players and get x3 your buy in, and the best part about is the entertainment and enjoyment of playing as well as the fact it only cost you \$11, as opposed to a slot machine where you could play through \$100 in 2 minutes with no skill or thought involved at all.

The last point I'd like to make under this question is what it really costs the average person to play. Firstly, it is paramount to understand venues like casinos for instance are designed to eat your money in slot machines, expensive beverages and casino games which can realistically cost anyone well over \$500 with mostly no return from it at all. Online poker also caters for low volume people in their own comfort. You can literally play poker online for 25 cents and the game can last hours. It gives you flexibility on what you want to buy in for, and the great thing is you don't need to invest so much. If the government are concerned with the effects of gambling, don't put poker under that category, it truly does not cause problem gamblers, it is a cheap, recreational game that many adults play as a hobby, and for some it is a winnable game that they take seriously.

- C) The first thing to consider with the original Act is it is outdated and not coherent with the current times. Back when this bill was introduced the world was not yet quite 'online' as it is today, in fact it was nowhere near, and so this enforcement would have had no effect, as online poker wasn't played much at all in those times. Now however it is played by thousands who honestly experience no issues at all. A poker site, Poker Stars, is a globally recognised, trusted website. It offers responsible gaming, self-exclusion, excellent customer service, extremely secured funds and has a high level software protection. The act it seems doesn't recognise that websites like poker stars exist, which are always compliant with regulation, however places ALL offshore websites/services as negative. This is honestly not the case. The original act in my opinion was poorly executed and wasn't clear on much. The amendment however I feel is better in what is generally aimed at which I hope is protecting Australians from shady, nefarious gambling/wagering websites, unfortunately, online poker, and by this I mean online poker offered by trusted websites like Poker stars is being thrown under the same label. I feel the amendment was necessary to stop shady websites operating in Australia & to stop online slot machines, but online poker is a completely different category and should be treated as such. We all need to be realistic about what a ban of online poker means, it means untrustworthy websites that operate still if the legislation is in place as the trusted websites will leave to maintain their integrity and honour the laws of the government. I think everyone needs to ask themselves, is this actually helping anyone? I have made many points on how poker is not a form of traditional gambling and is very low

risk. I am behind regulating poker, I believe it should be regulated but not banned; it is fairly absurd to think online poker could even be considered in the same category as what this bill should be targeting (slot machines, untrusted offshore websites etc.). The trusted websites will agree to regulation and have to other nations who have frameworks that have the 'everyone's happy' scenario. Put it in this perspective: If online poker is banned, many people will continue to play the game they like on untrusted sites which instantly defies the intent of the bill, and on top of this the government misses out on the regulating it & revenue. However if it is regulated, the players can continue to play safely, the government can regulate, gain revenue & the shady, untrustworthy websites will dissipate. The final point I would like to make is I don't think it's the governments job to force a ban upon things that don't have much consequences of harms associated with it. I am a taxpaying adult playing a game on a globally recognised and trusted website that has caused no harm to me or anyone else. Conclusively, online poker should not be included in the IGA and I hope it is excluded as soon as possible.