

Hi!

I'm an Australian recreational poker player. I currently play online and live (Poker Stars, Crown Casino and some pub venues).

I'm an ex-gambling addict. For years gambling was a serious addiction/problem for me. Ultimately for a couple of years my wife had to manage my finances for me, hold on to my bank cards, my bank passwords, etc.

Online poker actually assisted me in over-coming my addiction. Not only because it is a game of skill and with enough dedication one can eventually consistently win over the long term. But also because I feel it has a very low addiction potential. Unlike the pokies machines, that I struggled with, with poker it's a lot easier to manage an affordable bankroll and the games can last for a long time. Meaning that even as a recreational "losing" player, it's easy to get good value for money (entertainment).

I honestly used online poker to transition from a problem gambler (pokies), to a recreational poker player who sometimes makes a bit of money and is never in a situation where I've spent more than I can afford on the hobby.

I wholeheartedly support banning online casino games. Heck – I support banning LIVE casino games / pokies. I find them despicable and vulture-like. If I join an online Poker Room that offers casino games on the side – I self-exclude from the casino games.

So I'm not saying we don't need to do something about gambling in general – we do! I think it's an awful, destructive force in our communities. I personally experienced what I can only describe as 'devastation' in my life, as a direct result of gambling, for years.

I actually fear that if online poker becomes prohibited, then I may ultimately succumb to my old habits again. Which would absolutely shatter my world.

I ask that online poker is not lumped in with the rest of online gaming. It is not the same and if you only dig a little, you will find a very healthy online poker community that is vastly separated from the gambling/gaming community in general. They're not the same thing and I plea that Australian law recognises this and preserves the ability to play poker online for real money.

I guess that is all I really have to say on the issue.

Thank you.

Regards,

Oh – just to add. I would suggest a read of this study by the Australian Government in 2012 (A review of the 2001 Act) which identifies online poker as low-risk and recommends exclusion from prohibition:

<https://www.communications.gov.au/file/7811/download?token=F785mC4I>