

City of Sydney

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Mr Hamish Hansford
Committee Secretary
Community Affairs References Committee
By email: community.affairs.sen@aph.gov.au

Dear Mr Hansford,

Inquiry into the prevalence of interactive and online gambling in Australia

The City of Sydney (the City) acknowledges that whilst many people engage in gambling in a responsible way, for others gambling is a serious problem which can have wide ranging psychological, social and economic impacts.

Within the City of Sydney local government area there are nearly 2000 licensed premises, the City has more poker machines than any other local government area (LGA) in NSW and the second highest losses by residents and visitors through electronic gaming machines in Australia.

The City understands that there is currently no national measure of Internet gambling participation in Australia. The prevalence of interactive and online gambling by residents, workers and visitors to the City of Sydney LGA is not known. The City understands that the global trend is an increasing prevalence, particularly among young people, in interactive and online gambling (Monaghan, 2006).

High levels of internet and technology use by residents of the city and a relatively young population suggest that the prevalence of interactive and online gambling is likely to be comparatively higher than other parts of Australia.

Research and data analysis indicates that the resident population of the City of Sydney is particularly susceptible to problem gambling and gambling addiction. The City strongly supports measures centred on prevention and harm minimisation for problem gamblers and their families and therefore the investigation of interactive and online gambling through the Inquiry.

Research in 2003 estimates that there were 71,708 problem gamblers in 2000-01 in New South Wales, that they lost on average over \$27,000 each and created an additional community cost of \$7,700 each or \$576 million in the State (National Institute of Economic and Industry Research, 2003). The City recommends that the State Government investigates the social and economic cost of problem gambling to individuals, families and the state; and develops appropriate legislative, policy and service responses to mitigate these costs.

Yours sincerely,

Monica Barone
Chief Executive Officer

city of villages

BACKGROUND

The City of Sydney

The City of Sydney Local Government Area (LGA) covers approximately 26.15 square kilometres.

As at June 30 2007, Sydney had a resident population of 168,862 people, a workforce population of approximately 350,000 and it is estimated that 400,000 people visit the city each day to shop, be educated, conduct business with firms in the City or simply be entertained. In the year to Dec 2004, 2.4 million international visitors came to the Sydney Metropolitan area.

Problem Gambling and the City of Sydney LGA

The City understands problem gambling to be 'excessive gambling behaviour that creates negative consequences for the gambler, others in his/her social network, and for the community' (Ferris, Wynne and Single, 1999) and recognises that gambling is a social and recreational pastime for visitors to, and residents of, our city.

Research and data analysis indicates that the resident population of the City of Sydney is particularly susceptible to problem gambling and gambling addiction. Research conducted by the State Government of Victoria, the Salvation Army and Southern Cross University has identified that problem electronic gaming machine usage was highest in the following population groups:

- Males – 20-24 years and 65-69 years
- Renters
- People living in 1 bedroom accommodation
- People without children
- Recipients of social benefits
- Migrants of European and Asian descent

Problem gambling has also been found to be higher among Aboriginal people. The following table provides an evaluation of these trends compared to the City of Sydney: Males – 20-24 years and 65-69 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Males comprise close to 54% of the population of Sydney • 16% of the population in the 18-24 year old age bracket • 6.8% in the 60-69 bracket • A further 29.8% in the 25-34 year old bracket
Renters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 46% of residents are renter, this is significant higher than the 25% of people who rent in the rest of NSW
People living in 1 bedroom accommodation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Over 60% of dwellings in the City are units, with the most common being studio and 1/2 bedroom • The average household size in the City is 1.95 people
People without children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 59% of couples in the City of Sydney are couples without children and lone person households comprise close to one third of all household types in the City

Recipients of social benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A proportion of the City's residents are recipients of social security benefits. In some suburbs of the City, the proportion is more than 60%.
Migrants of European and Asian descent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Over one third (34%) of the residents of the City were born overseas with the largest groups coming from European and Asian nations. • Some 23% of all migrants in Sydney come from a non-English speaking background.
Aboriginal communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aboriginal communities in the city include Redfern, Waterloo, Glebe, Woolloomooloo and Millers Point.

In assessing the impact of gambling in the City it is also necessary to include:

- The 350,000 people that work in the City on a daily basis.
- The 400,000 people that visit the City daily to shop, dine and be entertained.
- The 2.4 million tourists that annually visit the City.

Problem gambling and its associated psychological and social impacts have been identified as problems affecting both residents and visitors to the City for a number of decades. This is reflected in the location of over 30 government agencies, services and organisations located in the City, which seek to address the problems of gambling and provide support to gamblers, their families and friends. Some of these organisations include:

- St Vincent's Hospital Gambling Treatment Program
- William Booth House, Wesley Gambling Counselling Service
- University of Sydney Gambling Research Unit

Through its involvement in planning assessment, community development, community safety, social planning and economic development activities the City has sought to promote problem gambling awareness and encourage harm minimisation.

Costs of Problem Gambling

For some people gambling is a serious problem which can have wide ranging psychological, social and economic impacts. Research in 2003 estimates that there were 71,708 problem gamblers in 2000-01 in New South Wales, that they lost on average over \$27,000 each and created an additional community cost of \$7,700 each or \$576 million in the State (National Institute of Economic and Industry Research, 2003).

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