



LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
PARLIAMENT HOUSE
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Minister for Gambling
GPO Box 464
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By email: gamblingpolicy@sa.gov.au

Dear Minister

Please find enclosed my questions and comments for consideration for the Unlawful Instruments of Gaming Consultation.

Thank you for your consideration of these matters.

Yours sincerely

Hon Robert Brokenshire MLC

Questions for Consultation

1. What *aspects* of arcade and other games should be considered when declaring instruments of unlawful gaming? Please provide examples, including photographs where possible.

Family First's principal concern about arcade games are those that condition children towards machine that entices them to take risks akin to gambling, encourage addictive behaviour or that condition children to the characteristics or operations of poker machines.

2009 research by Southern Illinois University reported that according to the 1999 National Gambling Impact Study Commission people who begin gambling as youth or adolescents are more likely to meet criteria for pathological gambling at some point in their lifetime than those who do not begin gambling at such an early age. Nearly one third of the pathological gamblers interviewed in a study by Dell, Ruzicka, and Palisi (1981) reported gambling prior to the age of 10 years, and nearly half of the pathological gamblers in a 2005 study by Petry reported gambling before the age of 18 years. It is acknowledged that a great many children's board games involve dice and rewards for luck or chance, and can not reasonably be tackled as a response to problem gambling.

More research is needed in this area in the Australian context. For instance in 1997 research the Australian Psychological Society stated that there was, then, no data on Australian rates of under-age participation in gambling but overseas surveys revealed - at that time - 24-40% of school aged children and adolescents admitting to gaming weekly. The Government may have that research available to it and in any case statistics ought to drive government responses to the issue.

It is a secondary concern that we do not embark on a broad legislative exercise on this as we are already over-regulated. We think taxpayers would be concerned if Parliamentary Counsel were engaged to particularise at law the different categories of arcade game described in the consultation paper when all are legitimate except the games under the working title of 'merchandise games' in the discussion paper, and perhaps games akin to junior poker machines. It is our preference that using existing legislative powers, a relevant authority declare illegal particular types of arcade game that infringe principles similar to those that we have declared above.

Of particular concern are gaming precursor games that might be situated in pubs and clubs where there are poker machines. We recognise the work of PokieACT in Victoria on this issue, for instance. In our view Governments ought to take a dim view of family days, free admission for children and placing amusement machines of any kind in close vicinity to poker machine venues, since this could enable gambling

parents to attend such venues whilst child care is taken care of by that entertainment or an amusement machine.

On a closing note, some contributing to this review might point to history where poker or slot machines were once, in some jurisdictions, 'fruit machines' that dispensed children's confectionery – hence, as we understand it, the cherry / orange symbols on the classic fruit machines. Our research suggests such machines do exist in the USA but have not been updated for decades and are purely of novelty value and yield nowhere near the revenue to licensed venues and State governments as present day poker machines. Poker machine gambling has come a long way since the fruit machine and we would reject any attempt to undermine the process by suggesting that fruit machines have a heritage that would be lost by the controls the Government is contemplating in this review.

2. What would be the *impacts* on industry, the community and problem gambling of declaring certain arcade and other games to be unlawful instruments of gaming?

Whilst providers of arcade games may protest, Family First believes there is a community expectation that they provide arcade games responsibly by not encouraging gambling. One sensible avenue of enquiry would be for the Government to explore the business and personal associations of those manufacturing such games and those who manufacture, for instance, poker machines.

We mention in passing that although it is beyond the scope of this review, there is nothing stopping children playing computer games over the internet that might be precursors to gambling behaviour. A great many computer games for instance encourage addictive behaviour, keeping the player playing in the expectation of greater reward later in the game. This is not gaming precursor behaviour, *per se*, but is in our view an area Government ought to monitor for future developments in computer gaming.

In any event, it would be worthwhile coupled with this initiative for the government to include in education curriculum or family advice outlets (or both) warnings about the dangers of both gambling and addictive behaviour, be it with toys or on the internet. For instance, the same Australian Psychological Society research from 1997 (described earlier) recommended as a primary prevention method that "Children and adolescents should be provided with school-level education on probability theory, gambling and the potential effects that excessive gambling may have on themselves and on others. Children are exposed to gambling behaviour at an early age. Therefore it is important that children develop an accurate perception and understanding of gambling as a form of entertainment, the likelihood of winning/losing at gambling, and the negative psychosocial effects of excessive gambling.

3. Do you have any other comments about instruments of unlawful gaming?

It is a continuing concern that toy and novelty stores continue to sell gaming simulations such as roulette wheels, poker tables etc. Whilst there may be an argument that adults would want to purchase items from these stores, in our view the games sold are of low quality manufacture and likely only to be of interest to children. Their positioning is often at eye-level for children and not at an adult eye-height. In our view the Government should consider within the scope of this review requiring retailers to refuse sale of gambling-like games or instruments to minors.

It is also questionable whether problem gambling is encouraged by food marketed to children that includes a possibility of winning a prize or finding a reward if a child buys more of the product. For instance a chocolate bar or bag of potato chips that includes a possibility of winning a popular children's toy or experience if more product is purchased. Whilst also beyond the scope of this review, Governments ought to consider the social benefit of this form of marketing to children with a view to potential problem gambling behaviour.