From: Peter Howat [Phowat@health.curtin.edu.au]
Sent: 9 September 1999 17:49
To: gambling@pc.gov.au
Subject: Submission on Australia's Gambling Industries

28 August 1999

Productivity Commission
PO Box 80
Belconnen ACT 2616

Dear Sir

Re: Electronic Gaming Machines and the Productivity Commission Draft Report As you are aware, The Public Health Association of Australia (WA Branch) strongly supports the Western Australian Government in its opposition to the introduction of electronic gaming machines (EGMs) into hotels and clubs in this State.

Findings in your recent Draft Report on Australia's Gambling Industries reaffirms this stance. It is very clear that the major social and health related problems attributed to gambling are the consequence of electronic gaming machines (EGMs). Fortunately for Western Australia, the effect of EGMs has been relatively minor compared to other parts of the country due to sound Government policies to confine them mainly to the Burswood Casino. It is therefore imperative that the Government resists the ongoing pressure by the Hotels Association and other vested interests to allow any increase in the number of EGMs in Western Australia.

Those vested interests have already taken some of the information from the Productivity Commission's Draft Report, and distorted it as part of their relentless lobbying to get EGMs in hotels in WA.. Specifically, they have agreed that harm minimisation approaches should be implemented wherever EGMs are available. We agree that such measures are necessary where EGMs currently exist. However, we are concerned that the proponents of EGMs are inferring that " problems associated with EGMs can be prevented by implementing harm minimisation measures".

We believe that the evidence is clear that no matter what 'harm minimisation' measures are enacted for EGMs, substantial gambling related problems would still arise attributed to the EGMs. Accordingly, it is imperative that the Government of Western Australia resists all pressures to allow any expansion of EGMs into this State until it can be proven conclusively that health and welfare problems associated with EGMs gambling can be prevented by the so-called harm minimisation measures. The onus should be on the proponents of EGMs to provide this proof.

Accordingly we would welcome some stronger statements in your report that supports the Western Australian Government in its intention to resist any increase the availability of EGMs in WA.

Sincerely

Dr PA Howat
Spokesperson

Public Health of Australia (WA Branch)
Peter Howat
Assoc Professor and Head
Dept Health Promotion
School of Public Health
Curtin University