

State Round-up February 2009

New South Wales

Poker machine revenue in NSW is has been steadily rising since July 2008 suggesting the impact of the smoking ban in clubs and hotel is largely over with revenue returning to pre-smoking ban levels. The revenue collected from pokies in December 2008 was just \$8 million short from December 2006, which may be partially related to the Government's stimulus package in December. The anti-poker machine campaigner Senator Nick Xenophon said the ability for NSW venues to move their gaming machines to outdoor smoking areas was the real reason for rising revenues.

New laws came into effect on 31st January 2009 that aim to reduce problem gambling in NSW. Creditcard withdrawals from ATM and EFTPOS facilities in gaming venues have been banned and a cap has been placed on the number of pokies a venue can have. Prize money must be paid by cheque to be cashed by a bank and pokies must be hidden from view from outside the venue.

West's Tigers have announced a six-figure sponsorship with online gambling agency Betfair. The NRL refuses to allow wagering sites, such as Betfair and others, to advertise on football jerseys due to what is termed "moral and ethical" grounds. Under the deal, Tigers fans will be exposed to Betfair at each of the club's three home grounds - the SFS, Campbelltown and Leichhardt. They will be shown how to bet in booths set up outside the entrance; the big screen will run ads; promotional girls will hand out literature; there will be commercials read over the PA system and, of course, there will be signage at the grounds.

Victoria

Firstly thanks to all for the assistance from other states that has been given to Victorians during our bushfire appeals.

The new generic codes of conduct and self exclusion programs have now been submitted to the Victorian Commission for Gambling Regulation for approval and expect to be approved by 06/03/09.

EGM gaming venues will be required to subscribe to a particular generic code and self-exclusion program or to submit their own for approval.

All new codes and self-exclusion programs must be implemented by 1 June 2009.

The Victorian Dept of Justice pre-commitment working group has been working through the parameters of what a pre-commitment "mechanism" may look like

and how it will operate. It could however be over taken by a national recommendation from the productivity commission.

The Victorian responsible gambling awareness week working group meets regularly and the program for the week (to be held in May) is progressing well.

Micheil Brodie the Director, Gambling Policy and Strategy at the Dept of Justice has resigned to take up a position with the Northern Territory government.

South Australia

The main issue in South Australia during the last 3-4 weeks has been ongoing discussion concerning the value of smart cards as a harm minimisation strategy in venues. There are currently a number of hotels around Adelaide that have activated a pre-commitment facility available through the existing loyalty or J-card system. Patrons can sign up voluntarily to this system and set limits on expenditure, time-outs and so forth. A failure to comply with these self-imposed warnings leads to messages appearing on the machine and a loss of bonus points and a notification being sent to the system accessible to gaming staff at the venue.

The IGA is holding an inquiry into the value of various forms of card technology. There is currently debate about whether cards should be made compulsory for problem gamblers, or all gamblers. SkyCity has articulated its strong opposition to these more extreme measures because it may have a very deleterious effect on the popularity of gaming at the venue. In fact, they have gone so far as to question the viability on their operation if some of the proposed / hypothesised measures were to be introduced.

The IGA will continue with its deliberations and a report from the inquiry is likely to appear in the near future.

Meanwhile, the State Govt has tendered research into the effectiveness of the J-card based system