

Submission for investigation into Crown Casino

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Attachments: C_RC_Submission- cover-sheet Confidential .pdf (664.71 kB)

Hello

I am Confidential and this is my story. I have attached the cover letter with my details as well.

As soon as we came to Australia, my ex-husband and I were looking for jobs. We had a toddler with us. We were well educated, from middle-class professional families and had worked in a few other countries as well.

I got a job in Adelaide and he, in Sydney. As newly arriving migrants, we didn't have any friends or relatives in Australia, and combined with the isolation, my ex-partner started gambling immediately.

Then we decided to move to Melbourne together, we were both working full-time. He was working in the city, which most professionals do, so he was easily tempted to go to Crown casino as a place to "relax" after work. We were aware of Las Vegas and other casinos in USA, as we lived there for 6 years. But I had no idea how intrinsically gambling was accepted, normalised and ingrained within Australian culture. I had heard of horror stories of bankruptcy and suicide at Las Vegas. We had to take a flight to go Las Vegas or Atlantic city in the USA, but here the Casino was right at our door step!

I worked in/around the city as well but had to return home after work, to take care of my daughter. Eventually he was practically at Crown most evenings and nights - if not, at a nearby Pokie venue.

We lost all our savings, though we were earning 6 figure salaries. I did not know about any services, nor was in a position to find out about them when I was drowning in my troubles. I was managing work, a child and my household, while simultaneously being pressured by relatives back home. I was told it was just a habit which will change as times goes by, I was from a country where formal gambling was practically non-existent. People had a cultural awareness that gambling was harmful but did not associate it with addiction nor understand formal practices like pokies where thousands could be lost within a few hours.

I had found loyalty cards and other additional cards my husband had procured for the sole sake of gambling.

My ex-partner had broken down many times and told me about losing huge amounts of money, the largest I could remember is \$30,000 in one night.

But neither the banks nor the Casino/venues ever intervened or contacted me. We had savings from working in various countries include UK, USA and Singapore. We were planning to settle down, buy a house to live in and an investment property, and allocate education funds for our child from all our savings. But we lost everything within few years.

My partner was in denial and refused to seek help. We only knew about psychology services, other services were not advertised as much then. We were from corporate sector, got jobs immediately. We did not come into contact with Centrelink or other services where such options like Gamblers Help may have been advertised. I saw a gentle caring person, becoming violent and unpredictable. It came to a stage where I feared living with this person. I had to seek help from the police and the courts to keep my daughter safe and to not end up on the streets. A loving, caring, well educated, law abiding, hardworking and high-earning resident had become violent and unpredictable, and a danger to his own family!

After encountering a life changing experience due to my ex-partner's gambling addiction, I wanted to know more on the addictive nature of gambling and the overall environment in Australia to make it the gambling capital of the world. I changed career to the social welfare sector and have been working in the gambling and family violence sector for over a decade. I have co-ordinated a team of recovered gamblers and affected others, who have been from very diverse backgrounds with amazing professional and personal life experiences to their credit. But they have been all lured into this maze by Casinos and Poker venues to deprive them of their finances, family and dignity. They have tried to self-exclude which had hardly helped due to the negligent attitudes of the venue staff, induced time and again by loyalty programs, constant incentives by the venues to continue gambling, even when utterly dejected have never been helped by venue staff.

I have been shocked to notice that there is no duty of care expected from banks, accountants and others who may come across severe gambling harm signs from their clients. The social cost of gambling is astounding which pales against the revenue raised from those who can afford to lost the least

I sincerely feel the predatory practices by this powerful gambling industry should be thoroughly analysed. A huge amount of work needs to be done to engage all those involved to make gambling stop at being a form of Entertainment and not go beyond the boundaries to becoming self-destructive - for the individual gamblers, their friends/family/colleagues and the rest of the society.

I am happy to appear as a witness if required and I look forward to this investigation bringing about reform for the entire gambling system in Victoria and rest of Australia.

Thanks and regards,

Confidential