

Hon. Ray Finkelstein AO QC  
Commissioner  
Royal Commission into the Casino Operator and Licence

*By email*

20 May 2021

We write to convey our concerns regarding access to data from the Regulator [VCGLR] and from Crown Casino Melbourne, required for independent research relevant to reducing harm from gambling. As researchers who have published widely on the public health aspects of gambling, we have experienced difficulties obtaining access to environments and data relevant to our research.

#### **Access to data from VCGLR [The Regulator]**

We have had problems with denial of requests for data [or even discussion of same] collected by the Regulator. Ultimately this has resulted in researchers simply not seeking access to such data from the Regulator, in knowledge that such requests will be refused.

It is also clear the VCGLR lacks the expertise and resources to collect and effectively analyse electronic gambling machine data. Analysis of such data would provide important insights into gambling behaviour and patterns of harm, but VCGLR appears to lack both the curiosity and the wherewithal to do any more than ensure that revenue is correctly collected. Given the priority in relevant legislation to minimise harm from gambling, such activities should be seen as a high priority. That they are not is a major contributing factor to continuing high levels of gambling harm.

#### **Access to Crown Casino data**

We have direct experience of being denied access to Crown data and for example, refused access to visit Crown premises with employees of the Regulator, to observe new gambling products. Also in 2003/4, we are aware of an instance where an international researcher engaged by the Gambling Research Panel, sought loyalty program data, a potentially important set of information that could contribute significantly to knowledge of gambling harms and behaviour. Although this research was funded by a Victorian government agency [GRP] after a direction from the then Minister for Gambling, the data were not provided electronically and only after substantial delay, and in a voluminous collection of paper print outs, rendering the data useless.

We request that access to the casino for research purposes and to casino data that is useful for research, be made a condition of casino licensing and that more transparency and accountability for research access be an expectation of a core accountability of the Regulator.

Yours sincerely,

Personal Information  


**Professor Linda Hancock,**

Deakin University [Chair of the Independent Gambling Research Panel 2000-2004 and as an independent casino/gambling researcher]

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**Associate Professor Charles Livingstone,**  
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