

Gambling Impact Society (NSW) Inc.



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Media Release

Responsible Gambling Awareness Week - May 12 – 18th 2008

The Gambling Impact Society (NSW) Inc. (GIS) is promoting the Fifth National Responsible Gambling Awareness Week (RGAW) with its theme, 'Pause Off The Pokies' as part of our community awareness raising efforts. This RGAW is part of a national collaborative effort supported by Problem Gambling Counselling Services, Gambling Venues, Governments and other stakeholders nationwide. The aims of the week are to raise awareness of the risks of gambling, tips on how to stay in control, how to identify a problem and where to go if you need help.

The GIS (NSW), led by Chairperson Kate Roberts, will commence the week with a launch event – a one day Public Seminar at the Wesley Conference Centre, Pitt Street Sydney- where the focus will be upon 'Public Health and Health Promotion Approaches to Current Gambling Issues'. The Hon. Graham West M.P.- Minister for Gaming and Racing - will open and launch the week of activities. This event will bring together a range of guest speakers, who work in the fields of Justice (Vic), Education (UWS) and Gambling (Australian Gaming Machine Manufacturers), along with representatives from the Responsible Gambling Fund Branch (NSW Office of Liquor Gaming and Racing), Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council of NSW and Consumer Voices. Anyone who is interested in gambling issues is encouraged to attend (visit website - www.gisnsw.org.au - for details/ registration).

This year there will also be a pertinent focus on Youth and Teenagers and their vulnerability to gambling issues due to the fact that they are exposed to increasing and easily accessible gambling venues and advertising, "which has the pervasive acceptance of the community"(Dr Ken Wilton, 'Youth and Gambling')

Whilst gambling can remain a form of entertainment for some, more and more people are finding problems developing with their gambling habits. The 1999 Federal Inquiry into gambling found that over 300,000 Australians have moderate to severe gambling problems and for every one, so affected, there are at least 5 –10 other people negatively affected. This was demonstrated by practising lawyer Peter Walsh (Casino) in his letter (March 20th 08) to SMH) – "In the courts, where I practise, hardly a week goes by without a story of thousands of dollars lost. That 1per cent of gamblers are considered (to be) problem gamblers, does not lessen the problem. When people tell the court that they have spent \$300,000 in poker machines, that is a problem for society- 1per cent or not. Playing with numbers may make the problem seem small – until you are part of the family destroyed by gambling addiction". **The latest NSW prevalence study found that 5.5 % of gamblers had gambling problems (Nielsen, 2006).The majority of those affected have difficulties with poker machines.**

What do readers think?

- Do you think we need consumer protection measures fitted to poker machines?
- Do you think there is an over supply of poker machines in our clubs/hotels?
- Do you realise that you don't have a choice in this matter?
- Do you think, that as members of a community, we should?
- Do you think that this is worthy of community debate?

As Kate Roberts says, “During this week we hope to encourage thoughts about the effects of gambling on individuals, their families and the community and increase understanding about the risks and the ramifications of associated problems”.

Did you know that 93% of those affected by problem gambling do not present themselves for counselling (NAGS, 2007)? Early intervention (help for depression/ with finance) can reverse the cycle of problem gambling and put help get life back in control.

There is a network of government funded services across the state aimed at helping anyone whose life has been affected by the impacts of gambling:-

G-Line Tel; 1800 633 635 is a 24 hour state-wide information, counselling and referral service with details about local services across the state.

Gambling Impact Society (NSW) Inc. Tel: 02 44 215077 provides information, education, support and advocacy as well as information kits , self help information and a self-help website – www.gisnsw.org.au

If you are affected by a gambling problem, or know someone whom you think may have a gambling problem do not sing with a voice of silence. Find out all you can for yourself and encourage him/ her to get help.

**Think About Your Actions During This Week - Take A Break – “Pause Off The Pokies”.
And Stay In Control**

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Chairperson - GIS