

**MEDIA RELEASE: Public Health Approach Needed For Problem Gambling –Seminar  
May 11<sup>th</sup>, Sydney**

As Responsible Gambling Awareness Week (May 11- 17<sup>th</sup>) approaches the Gambling Impact Society (NSW) is calling for a comprehensive approach to address problem gambling and prevent further incidences.

Kate Roberts, Chairperson says, “it’s time the community realised just how much problem gambling is costing us in terms of health and social care as well as the impacts on poverty”. Her main concerns have been the increasing levels of harm caused by poker machines in the community “the ready access and high dependency by gambling providers upon those gambling problematically (over 40% of their profits come from those with problems) has to end. It’s time we took this issue seriously and stopped trying to minimize it”.

“The 2008 NSW Health Survey demonstrates that over 10% of NSW families are struggling with this issue. That’s a far cry from the 0.8% quoted by the industry. As a totally voluntary community organisation trying to protect and prevent people from getting into problems we are appalled at the lack of commitment in NSW to fully addressing this issue”.

“So far we have just been tinkering at the edges with treatment for those affected and the odd community campaign to raise awareness of those treatment services. However, we need to get to people long before they start to develop problems. We have been advocating a comprehensive public health approach to gambling for years - similar to that we already have for Drugs, Alcohol and Tobacco. This would include consumer protection, incidence prevention, early intervention and treatment. Unfortunately the vested interests of the gambling industry seem to have our government in their hold, not least because State government gains over 11% of tax revenue from gambling.”

**On May 11th ,the Gambling Impact Society as part of Responsible Gambling Awareness Week will be hosting a one day seminar and community consultation at the Wesley Conference Centre, 220 Pitt St Sydney titled Challenges & Champions – Promoting Gambling Reform – Community and Family Perspectives.** The seminar will be opened by Senator Nick Xenophon. Keynote speakers include Professor Simon Chapman, University of Sydney a major advocate in the field of Tobacco reform and Dr Charles Livingstone, Monash University addressing consumer protection issues, along with a range of other guest speaker’s including consumers and community services (see [www.gisnsw.org.au](http://www.gisnsw.org.au) for registration details and full program). It promises to be a day for some constructive debate on getting to grips with the real issues of problem gambling and promoting reforms to truly develop what government proposes as a “Culture of Responsible Gambling” in NSW.

As Kate states “we really believe its time the community has a say on this, particularly those who have been directly affected, they so rarely ever get consulted. **This year there is a Federal Inquiry into gambling - it’s an ideal time to raise your voice**”.

**Further info: [www.gisnsw.org.au](http://www.gisnsw.org.au)**

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