

**Submission
No 1**

INQUIRY INTO GAMING MACHINE AMENDMENT BILL 2023

Organisation:ACTCOSS

Date 15 September 2023

Received:



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

STANDING COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE AND COMMUNITY SAFETY

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Submission Cover Sheet

Inquiry into Gaming Machine Amendment Bill 2023

Submission Number: 004

Date Authorised for Publication: 04 October 2023

Standing Committee on Justice and Community Safety
ACT Legislative Assembly
via email: LACommitteeJCS@parliament.act.gov.au

29 September 2023

To the Committee,

INQUIRY INTO GAMING MACHINE AMENDMENT BILL 2023

The ACT Council of Social Service (ACTCOSS) appreciates the opportunity to respond to the Inquiry into the Gaming Machine Amendment Bill 2023 (the Bill). ACTCOSS is the peak body for the community sector in the ACT, advocating for social justice in our territory and representing not-for-profit community organisations. Our vision is for an inclusive Canberra where no one lives in poverty. As part of this goal, ACTCOSS works to reduce the many forms of gambling harm experienced by vulnerable members of our community.

ACTCOSS strongly supports the Gaming Machine Amendment Bill 2023. The proposal to ensure that the Molonglo Valley and future residential and commercial ACT developments remain free from Electronic Gaming Machines (EGMs) aligns with the priority to reduce the number of EGMs in the ACT. The amendments proposed are a significant and welcome step towards reducing gambling harms in the ACT community, as well as providing an opportunity for community clubs in newly developed areas of Canberra to diversify their revenue sources.

Community clubs are an important factor in the implementation of these measures, as over 99% of the ACT's EGMs are in community clubs. Community clubs have in many cases come to unsustainably rely on income earned from EGMs to the detriment of people who are experiencing harms from gambling. The effects of gambling extend beyond the individual and impact families, communities, and broader society. The Bill recognises the adverse effects of gambling, which include financial damage, mental health impacts and difficulties with family and social relationships.

The key provision of the Bill that we support is the proposal to ensure the Molonglo Valley and all future residential and commercial developments in the ACT remain free from gambling venues. This is a crucial step towards creating safe and healthy communities into the future, particularly for those who are at risk of gambling-related harms. By preventing the proliferation of gambling venues in these areas, the Government can prevent vulnerable individuals and families from experiencing gambling harm, while promoting community cohesion and ensuring that the harms caused by EGMs are not further reproduced in new Canberra communities. This may also assist in reducing the burden of addressing gambling harms on mental health and other community support services.

The Bill has garnered support from Molonglo Valley community members, demonstrating widespread recognition of the need to address gambling harm in the ACT community. We encourage further engagement with community stakeholders to ensure the Bill's provisions are in line with the aspirations of the broader community. Data shows that Australians are concerned about the impact of gambling harms. Sixty eight percent of Australians believe that



gambling is “dangerous for family life” and 59% agree that gambling “should be discouraged”.¹ By taking steps to prevent the opening of further venues with EGM licences as detailed in the Bill, the ACT Government will ensure that pro-social entertainment and community venues that align with public values are prioritised in planning and development decisions.

In summary, ACTCOSS recommends that the ACT Government pass the Gaming Machine Amendment Bill 2023 as part of an ongoing project of reform to improve the social impact of community clubs through revenue diversification and reducing gambling harms in ACT communities.

Yours sincerely



Dr Devin Bowles
Chief Executive Officer
ACT Council of Social Service



¹ Australian Gambling Research Centre, [Gambling participation, experience of harm and community views](#), Australian Institute of Family Studies, March 2023.