



11 April 2014

The Research Director
Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee
Parliament House
George Street
BRISBANE QLD 4000

The Australian Christian Lobby (ACL) welcomes this opportunity to comment on the *Construction and Tourism (Red Tape Reduction) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2014*.

The reduction of red tape is an important goal. However, the Australian Christian Lobby questions the necessity of the proposed removal of certain gambling regulations. Gambling is significant social problem in Australia and in Queensland.

Australia-wide, 600,000 poker machine users spend about \$12 billion on poker machines each year. 95,000 people are poker machine problem gamblers, who together lose about \$5 billion per year on poker machines.¹ This means that just 15 per cent of users account for 40 per cent of expenditure, demonstrating the disproportionate effect that poker machines have on a small group of Australians.

In Queensland, nearly 0.5 per cent of adults are problem gamblers, with more than 7 per cent at low or moderate risk of developing gambling problems.² Data from 2009-10 shows that in that year Queensland adults spent nearly \$1.8 billion dollars on gaming machines, with a per capita rate of more than \$520.³

The aim of these amendments is to allow for greater poker machine use. Currently, there are more poker machines in the state of Queensland than there are in the Las Vegas Strip.⁴ Although the proposals will not allow the increase of machines, the effect will be more poker machine use

¹ Parliamentary Joint Select Committee on Gambling Reform (2011), *First Report*, p ix.

² Department of Justice and Attorney-General (2012), *Queensland Household Gambling Survey*, p 7, http://www.olgr.qld.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0018/251136/Queensland_Household_Gambling_Survey_Report_2011-12.pdf

³ Queensland Government, *Australian Gambling Statistics* (28th edition), Table QLD 21 and 22, p 151-152.

⁴ Tony Moore (July 24, 2013), *Brisbane Times*, 'More gaming machines in Queensland than Las Vegas: Echo boss', <http://www.brisbanetimes.com.au/queensland/more-gaming-machines-in-queensland-than-las-vegas-echo-boss-20130724-2qiz7.html>. See also Ed Komenda (November 14, 2013), *Vegas Inc*, 'Gaming changes: Number of slot machines on the Strip hits lowest point in more than a decade', <http://www.vegasinc.com/business/gaming/2013/nov/14/number-slot-machines-strip-hits-lowest-point-more/>.

resulting from the freer movement of machines to more densely populated areas. As the Discussion Paper for 2013's liquor and gaming red tape reduction inquiry stated, the regional boundaries were intended to:

*ensure entitlements do not gravitate to the south-east region creating an increase in the number of gaming machines per capita in that region.*⁵

The regulations in place are modest restrictions aimed at avoiding a build up of poker machines in any one region, and an increase in the number of machines per capita. These modest restrictions have already been weakened by last year's *Liquor and Gaming (Red Tape Reduction) and Other Legislation Act 2013*. The further amendments in this bill are unnecessary to achieve the goals of red tape reduction, and simply allow a slight loosening of restrictions on pubs and clubs. ACL questions whether the cost of looser poker machine regulation will be greater than the small benefit to pubs and clubs the amendments allow.

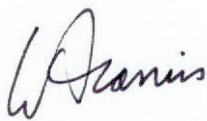
At any rate, a society in which problem gambling is a significant social problem should be making measures to reduce poker machine use rather than allow its increase.

ACL urges the Committee to recommend that provisions allowing for an increase in the use of poker machines be rejected.

Yours sincerely

Wendy Francis
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Australian Christian Lobby

Yours sincerely,



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⁵ Department of Justice and Attorney-General (February 2013), *Red tape reduction and other reform proposals for regulation of liquor and gaming*, p 23, http://www.olgr.qld.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0005/250547/DiscussionPaper_RedTapeReduction_Feb_2013.pdf.