

BREAK EVEN SERVICES SA

21 March 2005

Mr. Robert Chappell
Director
Independent Gambling Authority
Level 4
45 Grenfell Street
ADELAIDE SA 5000

Dear Mr. Chappell,

Re: Inquiry Into 'the Effectiveness of Government Funded Rehabilitation Services' and Programmes, South Australia

The network of services, under the common name of 'Break Even' was initially established in 1994 prior to the introduction of electronic gaming machines and comprised a range of agencies and individuals sharing the same concerns about the ramifications of this event.

Over the past 10 years the network has continued to meet and members set great store on the benefits of information sharing, mutual support, service delivery planning, and professional development, and with provision for discussion and debate with support from members and guest speakers.

At the meeting held February 7th, members who were not yet aware of the current Inquiry, discussed and agreed to submit a submission to the Inquiry as a collective network, and several member organisations are also submitting separately on behalf of their respective agencies.

This submission represents the views of members present at a subsequent meeting held on March 9th where a general consensus was reached on the positions and recommendations in this paper, however, these views are not necessarily the views of all members or their respective agencies nor intended to be so.

Key issues, points and recommendations (where noted)

1. General lack of resources:

- Inadequate resources for provision of sustainable and efficient service systems
- annual 'rollover' funding to Break Even services minimises or eliminates effective long-term planning, evaluation and service delivery
- Staffing provision mainly part-time because of budget constraints
- retention of experienced staff with years of 'practice wisdom' in the field of problem gambling is difficult given the disincentives, i.e, short term contracts, minimal pay rates, and for some staff, difficult conditions and environments.

Recommendations:

- Break Even Services to be funded for a 5 year period with adequate funding to service the `expressed and the unexpressed needs of clients and communities.
- Funding formulas for equitable distribution of resources are utilised interstate for Government funded services using an `hypothecated model of funding' and immediately transferable to the GRF funded services
- Provision of funding to deploy a range of approaches and interventions in response to the diversity of community need, i.e, primary health care responses, community development, local community education initiatives, and medical models of intervention by specialist services.
- Identify and establish a research framework and methodology specifically for the Break Even Services which encompasses qualitative data as well as quantitative, and which is independently implemented and evaluated.
- Provide funding for the provision of community education materials for Break Even Services at the local level. Currently community education resources are directed at the Gambling Helpline and whilst there is continued support for such a service, the Break Even Services should also have products for distribution to the community, funded and co-ordinated by the GRF and Health Promotion SA rather than relying on service funding or one off grants for Gambling Awareness Week.
- Financial Counselling provision is an integrated model of service delivery in much demand. Funding for recruitment, training and service development should be adequately funded particularly for the rural communities in the State.
- Adequate funding and appropriate research into the success of the integrated service delivery for clients with multiple problems would identify why and how this model results in positive and consistent outcomes for clients.
- Additional funding for research and service delivery for specialist services working with Indigenous and Culturally Linguistically Diverse cultures is paramount. That traditional interventions and models utilised by mainstream services are frequently inappropriate and irrelevant is consistently born out by national and international research. Pilot systematic literature reviews on an international basis may illicit more suitable models of intervention.
- Identification of efficient and effective service systems would include community capacity building, networking, resource sharing, and building on agency core business, would maximise the resources and optimise existing infrastructure.
- The Data Set has a long history of problems, some associated with software or hardware, and whilst a large amount of time and energy has gone into establishment and amendments, the system is unreliable. Software installed in recent weeks will enable agencies to generate their own data reports, however, early attempts to generate useful reports is still beyond the scope of the current system. Either a major overall is required or a new software

package needs to be produced if any of the data collection and management is to be of any use.

- Systematic and cohesive consultation with all stakeholders will encourage and reinforce the need for problem gambling to be acknowledged and addressed by and with the broader community.
- Funding for the re-appointment of a Break Even Services Coordinator to work with the member agencies will provide greater opportunities for consultation, resource sharing, information dissemination and distribution, research, collation of client resource materials, and development of training and professional development pathways for staff.
- Identification of early intervention models for disadvantaged and marginalised groups requires a broader focus and targeting at the local level and best addressed by taking a community development approach and involving a range of non Break Even agencies .i.e, community health, schools, neighbourhood centres, child youth and families, youth groups, community police, and local residents in general.

Finally, the members endorsed the need to identify `effective` interventions and service systems, and how these debates can be independently researched and facilitated.

Whilst no consensus could be achieved as to the efficacy of anyone model of treatment or intervention, and members acknowledged the discussion mirrored the issues for the broader community, in Australia and overseas, that is there is no definitive intervention to achieve the desired outcomes.

The members were in full agreement that the foundation stones of an effective and efficient service system lies within the stakeholders capacity to develop a strategic plan that reflects the community's capacity and willingness to genuinely and objectively address problem gambling.

We look forward to further opportunities to explore and implement strategies that will have a positive impact on `harm minimisation` in our communities and South Australia as a whole.

Yours truly

Janet Firth
Chair, Break Even Services SA