



**UnitingCare Wesley
Adelaide**

Submission to the Independent Gambling Authority

Regulatory Functions review

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1. Introduction

UnitingCare Wesley Adelaide is pleased to have this opportunity to raise concerns regarding compliancy of The Codes of Practice. Using the Codes of Practice as a guideline, interested, 'untrained parties' have visited many gambling venues throughout April 2006 to determine to what extent the Codes are upheld. What was found is that there is inconsistency in compliance among many venues. This submission has been compiled using information gained from those visits, as well as with the knowledge gained through talking with various members of the public on an informal basis.

2. What has been the impact and effectiveness of the implementation of the first stage?

The knowledge gained from the experiences of visiting venues and speaking to others, which are listed in **Appendix 1**, lead us to make the following conclusions regarding compliance with the Codes of Practice:

- **Compliance is extremely and consistently poor. Penalties for breaches need to be harsher and inspections need to be more frequent and unexpected.**
- Serious breaches have been noted (such as in Appendix 1 story 4), in which clearly inebriated persons have been assisted to play gaming machines
- Patrons who play more than one machine at a time is routinely ignored by gaming staff (Appendix 1 stories 7, 16 & 19)

3. The Process

Throughout the month of April 2006, interested parties visited various venues throughout the City and the Northern Suburbs, with the intention of determining whether or not the Codes of Practice are being upheld. Venues were checked for correct signage, availability and clear identification of staff members and for sobriety of patrons. These visitors also checked for screening of sights and sounds of gambling, positioning of ATMs and ACMs, the number of machines patrons were playing at one time and various other issues that have previously been associated with gambling harm. Appendix 1 of this document is a collation of these findings and it also documents conversations with various members of the public.

4. Codes Round 2, Evaluation and Action Priorities

Mandatory warnings in advertising On and in venue signage

There have been cases of signs that have been almost completely concealed by a poker machine, rendering it unreadable. At the same venue an A3-size sign was placed under a large colourful sign advertising promotions (Appendix 1, story 2). Some warnings to minor signs are not evident until you are actually in the gaming area.

For example, eight patrons were recently questioned regarding warning signage on poker machines; three responded by saying they thought they were taxi phone numbers and five said they were something to do with the manufacturer (Appendix 1 story 11).

Another venue that was visited displayed warning to minors on some machines and no Gambling Helpline signage. The same venue did not display signage written in any language other than English and there were no helpline cards near the machines in many of the venues (Appendix 1 story 21).

This breaches Codes of Practice: See *Responsible Gambling Code of Practice* clauses 4 (1) (a) & 5 (1) (b) (2) (b).

UnitingCare Wesley Adelaide strongly suggests a redesign of the labels, a stronger colour and a larger format. Due to the unfortunate position some Australian's find themselves regarding low levels of literacy a picture format of some warnings is suggested. For example a person playing two machines with a large red cross through it and a person playing one machine with a green tick.

There needs to be very clear guidelines put in place regarding the placement of signs and the amount of signage required to prevent a breach occurring.

Suggestion for mandatory warnings: a catchy jingle to music well known to almost everyone (ie. *row row row your boat* to be played on television and radio with words such as:

Lose, lose, lose your shirt

Simple as can be

Put your money into a poker machine and

We'll take it happily

After one month of going to air, the tune of the jingle could then be incorporated into gaming machines to be played without the words every thirty minutes.

UnitingCare Wesley Adelaide counsellors suggest that the language used in advertising and warnings be revised to clarify that gambling is not a game, it is a bet.

Screening of sights and sounds of gambling

There are still many venues clearly visible and audible to dining patrons including children (appendix 1 story 12 & 19). The comment in appendix 1 story 10 points out that people with a gambling problem are attracted to the sound and will go to it even though there was no initial intent to gamble. Therefore UnitingCare Wesley Adelaide believes the gaming room should not be seen or heard by patrons in the main dining area of any venue.

Six hour breaks – common closing hours for gaming machine venues

There needs to be a clear break from all gambling. It is the experience of UnitingCare Wesley Adelaide counselors, that a significant percentage of people gambling after midnight exhibit problem gambling behaviour. Therefore all hotels and clubs with poker machines should close down from midnight and not be allowed to open until 10.00am.

Inducement and loyalty programs

There are some patrons who feel free cake, scones, or other various incentives actually makes up for their gambling losses in some way. As a result, they will continue to return to these venues even after large losses because they feel that particular venue is looking after them. Appendix 1 story 19 shows that patrons need not even return to their homes at meal times because hot food is provided for them, which allows them to put a reserve on the machine they are playing so as to maintain their sense of continuity.

UnitingCare Wesley Adelaide believes there should be no loyalty provisions served in the gaming room that are not made available to patrons using other areas in the venue such as dining rooms and bars.

Relationship with counselling agencies

“The Authority decided in principle that gambling establishments should form a relationship with a local counseling agency. Submissions were sought on how this should be implemented.

The codes should operate to require hotel and club gaming machine licensees to form appropriate relationships with local gambling rehabilitation agencies.”

UnitingCare Wesley Adelaide is committed to developing effective and realistic relationships with local gambling providers.

For UnitingCare Wesley Adelaide this means developing relationship with 69 approximately, gambling venues (69 hotels and clubs, 108 Lotteries agents and 18 TAB agencies) in the southern suburbs of Adelaide and the Fleurieu Peninsula.

This is the dilemma that the organisation faces, namely how to develop affective working relationships with this number of venues while the agency is funded for 3.6 full-time equivalent counsellors? Each of these staff currently have full counselling loads with appointments made in advance, particularly in our Christies Beach office. An additional difficulty is being able to provide coverage outside of the times when gambling help services are normally operating, particularly late-night / early-morning times when significant levels of problem gambling activity are most likely to be occurring.

The development of effective and efficient models for operation is a high priority, with all parties needing to be realistic about what is achievable.

We understand that venues would like to be able to find a councillor who would come to the venue to meet with a customer, when the problem gambling behaviour has been identified. This outline of an approach has been suggested by the AHA at previous hearings.

This is currently impractical since counsellors will almost certainly be already working with a client who has booked in for an appointment.

The ideal working relationship between gambling providers and help services would comprise the following elements:

- all gambling venues staff know who provides the local gambling counseling service
- all venues include at least one staff member who is on duty when ever the venue is open whose primary responsibility is to identify problem gambling behaviour and to make initial contact with patrons exhibiting these behaviours
- patrons exhibiting problem gambling behaviours are referred to the local gambling help service who is able to respond promptly with appointments at a time and location that is convenient for the patron.
- the gambling help service is able to help individual patrons to deal with their gambling and related problems.
- where the gambler wants to return to the venue, are able to work out risk minimising behaviours that work for them
- where a bar in order is sought by the patron, this would be enforced by the venue.
- this is the gambling councillor has a mechanism whereby they can inform the venue of the risk minimising behaviours that patrons will be using
- venues are proactive in assisting patrons to stick to their risk minimising behaviours and are able to look out for the best interests of customers. (We note that the option of precommitment smartcards would be helpful option for some gamblers)

For this approach to work there will clearly need to be a greater commitment to resourcing by venues to reduce gambling harm.

To help to move to this sort of an approach, the following actions are likely to be helpful:

- Break even staff invited to regional meetings of gambling providers, e.g. southern suburbs hotels regional meeting.
- Active training venues, of all staff, about gambling harm reducing legislation, regulation and codes of practice with clear documentation about roles and responsibilities of individual staff members.

- Each venue to have a staff member was responsible gambling responsibilities available, whenever the venue is open.

Additional thoughts

Given concerns about levels of problem gambling behaviour late at night and in the early morning hours, perhaps there is scope for a mobile service to be developed across Break Even services, that provides a mobile, locum service.

This idea would need to be further developed through discussions between Break Even services, the Helpline and venues.

Reporting of potential problem gamblers

“The Authority decided in principle that gambling establishments should have an internal policy for the reporting by staff to management of persons who appear to have a gambling problem.

Submissions were sought on how the proposal might be implemented and what its impact would be.

The codes should operate to require there to be internal reporting processes, within hotel and club gambling businesses, for the identification of people showing signs of problem gambling behaviour.”

Reporting of problem gamblers

It is important for anyone holding a gaming license to be accountable to that license and part of the accountability is a responsibility for the well being of customers while using their particular venue. Therefore a condition of that license, which should be clearly stated, is that an internal policy must be enforced which will train staff to identify patrons (and report to management) who are displaying signs of problem gambling.

Keno in newsagencies pharmacies and similar environments

In a recent study, Dr Paul Delfabbro, Adelaide University Psychologist, found one in six students in year 10-12 gamble at least once a week on keno and scratchie tickets (Sunday Mail, 21 March 2004, p5). Keno is readily accessible in these venues and is giving children the ability to purchase these products.

Appendix 1 story 15 supports this claim when in casual conversation a teacher has stated this is a problem amongst the year eleven students he teaches. The screens are also positioned in a way that a customer is almost compelled to watch them while waiting in line. Having the game cards on tables in dining areas of hotels is also problematic as children fill them out and watch the numbers come up on the screen. Even though they have not necessarily placed a bet, they still experience the thrill of the game. Keno should not be accessible in dining areas where there will at any time be children present. Keno should be removed from

newsagencies and pharmacies. If the Authority rejects this suggestion, the game should be switched off between 3pm until 4.30pm when there are large numbers of school children present in the malls and shopping centers.

Age for selling gambling products

The codes should state no one under the age of 18 should be selling or paying out rewards for gambling products.

Smoking

Many of the venues visited were limited for space. Therefore the smoke free environment is impossible to obtain, which puts staff and non-smoking patrons at risk (Appendix 1 stories 2,11&17). In another case, a women patron who was standing over the back of her chair at a non-smoking machine smoked in clear view of staff.

Appendix 1 story 20 states how no smoking bans are routinely placed on the less popular machines, which is reducing the recreational value for non-smokers. In the interest of the health of staff and patrons and the potential for problem gamblers to take a self-enforced break there should be a total ban of smoking in all gaming venues.

Automated coin dispensing machines, automatic teller machines and cheque changing facilities

In many of the venues there were a minimum of two ACMs, and many of them situated between machines allowing for patrons to change money without even leaving their seat. Another venue had five ACMs mostly situated between machines with one changing a minimum of \$10 (Appendix 1 story 8). Many of the ATMs were adjacent to gaming rooms and required you to walk past them either upon entering the gaming room or leaving the premises. Many were directly outside the gaming room separated only by a partition. It has been noted that at present there is no requirement for ACMs to carry warnings of any kind. The introduction of machines of this type in many venues is also reducing the number of staff regularly in the area to none as the cashier role has all but become redundant.

UnitingCare Wesley Adelaide recommends the Authority ban all ACMs and ATMs from gambling venues since these increase the risk of problem gambling. Patrons of restaurants, lounges and bars can use eftpos universally, so there is no need for ATMs or ACMs. Should the Authority reject this proposal then ATMs and ACMs should be separate from the gaming room and at least twenty metres from the entrance to the gaming room with no lower limit on notes accepted on ACMs.

5. Compliance and Enforcement

It is very apparent from the handful of premises looked at by untrained people and the number of inconsistencies that there are very few premises that are compliant in all areas. The Office of Liquor and gambling annual report 7.11 *Inspections* states all gaming venues are inspected regularly, but then it goes on to state all but 26 premises were inspected at least once during 2004-2005 and these were scheduled for early 2005-2006. While it is understood ten inspectors and two compliance staff would be stretched to attend all venues on a more frequent basis it may be necessary to look at funding to employ and train more inspectors.

6. Game Approval

Some of the venues visited, are unsuitable to house gaming machines for safety reasons appendixes (1 stories 11 & 13).

While it is understood that persons were eligible to obtain a gaming licence if they held a hotel or club licence under *Gaming Machines Act 1992 (SA)* there are some premises that are not suitable to contain gaming machines due to occupational health and safety issues for staff and patrons. The position taken here is the need for review of the suitability of premises when considering granting licences or renewing them.

Also it would seem from the broad range of the placement of signage, helpline information and ATMs and ACMs that more staff education is required. It should be a mandatory requirement for licensed staff to update this training at least twice a year as it is a requirement for other professions caring for the well being of the public.

Appendix 1 stories 16 & 17 should be given careful consideration, as Daveron Park is notably one of the poorest areas in the Metropolitan region. The venues in this area had the most machines in use. In one of these venues a woman was playing three machines at once.

End

APPENDIX 1

INCIDENCE OF BREACHES OF CODES OF PRACTICE

These anecdotal examples clearly show that the current Codes of Practice are not being followed and are interpreted inconsistently.

It would seem from the evidence gathered in this document that more thorough investigation and clearer guidelines need to be set. This would hold venues with gaming licenses more accountable and make the codes easier to interpret and more difficult to violate.

The following summaries are gathered from a series of observations made by a person visiting venues and conversations with people with whom they have come in contact with during April 2006.

Story 1 Wednesday 22nd March 2006

Conversation with a university student

She and other family members dined at **VENUE 1**; after lunch they moved into the gaming room for coffee because it did not appear to them that tea and coffee were being served in the dining room. There was a sign over the refreshments stating they were for gaming room patrons only. When they endeavored to take a cup of coffee they were watched by staff and intimidated into putting money into an egm.

Story 2 Thursday 23rd March 2006 1200 hours

VENUE 2

- Warnings were displayed regarding gambling responsibly but one poster was on a side wall at the side of the egm making it difficult to read. Another was displayed under a larger sign advertising loyalties.
- The machines are loud considering the small space and the openness to the public.
- In the small space there are two change machines, one is positioned so that two players do not need to leave their seats to gain access.
- The cashier was only present in the room when he was buzzed for and showed annoyance when a patron only wanted to change a two-dollar coin.

Story 3 Thursday 23rd March 2006 1300 hours

VENUE 3

- Out the front there are bright colourful signs advertising pokies on the premises and a chalkboard promising “win at the (venue name)” with a picture of dollar note.
- There is a sign on the footpath alongside the gutter advertising the venue as having pokies
- Flashing lights displayed in windows of the gaming room

Story 4 Friday 24th March 2006 1145 hours

VENUE 4

- A clearly intoxicated man who was swaying and slurring his words and holding a glass of beer sought help from a staff member to get a machine working was assisted and wished good luck by the staff member.

Story 5 Friday 24th March 2006 1930 hours

VENUE 5

- Very compliant with signage
- Clearly visible clock
- Staff continually moving around among players
- Staff wearing identification
- Area spacious and well lit

Story 6 Monday 27th March 2006

VENUE 6

- Conversation with another student, she recently observed (due to having to wait for service) a staff member at the venue cashing a personal cheque so she could continue to play the cheque was for \$20.00. This amount was paid out in dollar coins.

Story 7 Friday 31st March 2006 1145 hours

VENUE 7

- A middle-aged woman was very obviously playing two machines at once. She was in clear view of two staff members who chose to ignore the play even though they were watching her at times.
- The machines are clearly visible from the street, the windows are darkened but the lights on the machine were unmistakably gaming machines.

Story 8 Friday 31st March 2006

VENUE 7

- Not all staff members were wearing identification, which appeared to be policy because those that were carried card ID. Staff members were, however, visible by wearing uniform shirt.
- Five change machines all situated so as players using adjoining machines did not need to leave their seat to change money.
- One machine carries a sign stating it does not accept \$5.00 therefore making minimum change \$10.00.

Story 9 Friday 31st March 2006 1945 hours

VENUE 8

- Plenty of good clear signage
- Staff wearing identification
- Staff moving freely through the area and seemed to be watchful of players
- No sign of intoxicated players
- There were however very loud machines for very small wins (ie. less than 10 one cent credits).

Story 10 Saturday 1st April 2006

Venue 9

One person, who believes that all ATMs should be removed from gaming areas, reported that at VENUE 9 you could hear the music from the machines and the coins paying out while in the dining room. He felt it was inappropriate because although he had budgeted to go out for a meal, he was forced to walk straight into an ATM positioned outside the dining area behind a partition that backs onto the gaming room. At this stage these folks do not see gambling as a problem for them but this did incite them to take cash out they could not really afford to try their luck.

Story 11 Monday April 3rd 2006 1215 hours

VENUE 10

- Very poor lighting, except for wall lights situated away from the machines the only lighting in the area is the machines
- Even though some machines had been allocated as smoke free the room was full of smoke and due to the lack of natural ventilation this is a hazard for staff and patrons
- The ATM was situated alongside the area and quite arguably in the area
- The change machine was situated between 2 egms
- Warning signage dodgy; one must be in the venue before you reached the signage.

Story 12 Monday 3rd April 2006 1300 hours

VENUE 11

- Copious advertising for prizes and other inducements such as offers of free Devonshire teas in the gaming area.
- Wins of five dollars or more make you eligible to go into other draws, which require you to be on the premises to claim your prize.
- ATM immediately outside the gaming area
- Change machine adjacent to egm
- Overheard the attendant telling a patron she would need to return for the draw of the Easter raffle
- The egms are clearly visible and audible to the dining area where a family with young children were sitting

Story 13 Monday 3rd April 2006 1345 hours

VENUE 12

- No attendant present in the gaming area and there did not appear to be provision for any
- Venue is in a basement and it appeared the only way out was the single staircase therefore a fire hazard

Story 14 Monday 3rd April 2006 1415 hours

VENUE 13

- Plaques on the wall stating "Ask our friendly staff for free light refreshments: soft drinks, tea and coffee." This could be seen as an inducement.
- Another sign under advertisement for spirits stated "Ask our friendly staff for service." I took this as waiting type service and this was in the gaming venue.

Story 15 Saturday 15th April 2006

Venue 14

A teacher at a private high school, who teaches year 11 students said a large number of his students have admitted to gambling and that it is having a negative impact on their lives. Two male students have said they regularly bet on the TAB. These students are not 18.

Story 16 Thursday 20th April 2006 1510 hours

VENUE 14

- Appropriate number of machines
- 40 people in the gaming room
- one large ACM positioned away from egms
- Signage in venue directing patrons to ATM
- One patron was at one time playing three machines; she then placed a reserve card on one of the machines but removed that after a short time and continued to play two machines.
- All of the one, two and five cent machines were being played
- It was pension day.

Story 17 Thursday 20th April 1530 hours

VENUE 15

- Appropriate number of machines
- 35 people in the gaming room
- One ACM positioned away from the egms
- Signage in venue directing patrons to the ATM
- Very few gambling helpline card there were at most machines and other various places around the room keno and lotto cards
- One patron was standing behind a chair in the no smoking area smoking and leaning over the chair to play the machine
- The area felt confined and the room was smoke filled
- All of the one, two and five cent machines were being played
- It was pension day

Story 18 Thursday 20th April 2006 1610 hours

VENUE 16

- Appropriate number of machines for a club
- One ACM away from the egms and signed with gambling warnings

- ATM well away from the gaming room and gambling warnings were posted on the machine
- Area is spacious and smoking bans were being adhered to.

Story 19 Thursday 20th April 2006 1630 hours

VENUE 17

- Appropriate number of machines
- 45 patrons in the gaming area
- Two ACMs situated away from the machines
- ATM is directly opposite the opening to the gaming room
- One player was playing two machines
- Person who entered the premises noted two males and one female in the bar having a cigarette. With them was a child of about three years old. When this person was leaving the premises the three adults were playing machines and the child was inside the gaming room area on the floor, when the female noticed the person watching she shooed the child out of the room and back into the bar area where there were no adults.

Story 20 Thursday 20th April 2006 1705 hours

VENUE 18

- Appropriate number of machines
- 28 patrons
- One ACM in the gaming room away from machines
- ATM is a long distance from the gaming room and there is no signage directing patrons to it
- A large platter of hot food was brought into the gaming room for patrons just after 1700 hours
- Gaming room open to bar area but closed off from dining area

Story 21 Monday 24th April 2006 2000 hours

One person stated that the smoking bans are put on the least popular machines therefore reducing the recreational value for non smokers.

Story 22 Tuesday 25th April 2006 1200 hours

VENUE 19

- Appropriate number of machines
- 2 ACMs neither carrying any warning signage
- ATM is adjacent to games room and one must walk past it to go between the dining room, the gaming room and the front door. The only signage on the machine is a small gambling helpline sticker.
- Some machines only display notice to minor signage and not gambling harm stickers

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- No gambling help pamphlets around machines only a small business card size of gambling helpline at the cashiers counter
- No warning sign that I could see written in any language other than English
- No staff wearing any name ID all waitress staff wearing shirts with the name of the hotel