

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN –

“The typical regular egm player in NSW makes 832 consecutive purchasing decisions in a session of play. During such a session 43.8% of regular players will report that they experience “an irresistible urge to continue”

Given that gaming is now typically described by the gambling industry as “purchasing a commodity or leisure product” would not a consumer watch-dog be concerned about a sales practice that provided the consumer with an automated unlimited supply of the product under conditions that were associated with the average regular customer feeling an uncontrollable urge to buy more?”

Mark Dickerson (2003).

My name is Sue Pinkerton. I am a Registered Nurse and problem gambling research consultant. Although I do not consider myself to be (nor that I’ve ever been) a “problem gambler”, I once played the pokies excessively. I played them five days a week, up to six hours per day for over three-years from mid1995 to early1999. During that time, approximately \$60,000 of my hard earned income was poured into the machines.

Like many “problem gamblers” I have spoken with both in Australia and overseas during the last six years, I first gambled around the age of ten, but until I came into contact with the pokies, my gambling was controlled, enjoyable, affordable and often indulged in during celebratory and social outings with friends. My problem was not – and still is not - with gambling per se. My problem was – and still is - with controlling what I do once I start gambling on poker machines.

The last time I played a gaming machine, I intended to play for one hour and spend no more than \$50. I blew \$500 in six hours that day. This happened despite my extensive knowledge of how gaming machines shape and condition behaviour and how the programmed in illusions such as the near miss, alter people’s perceptions about the probability of winning. It happened despite my knowing that the odds of winning a large payout were miniscule,

and it happened despite my very best intentions and determination to stick to a pre-determined spending limit that I could afford.

In the 6 years since I first attempted to quit the pokies I have spent countless hours reading, researching and discussing problem gambling as it pertains to gaming machines. I have spoken with psychologists, researchers, problem gambling clinicians, problem gamblers and anti-gaming activists from around the world. I have spent a small fortune on psychotherapy and attended problem gambling conferences both in Australia and overseas, all with a view to understanding why I did what I did. Everything I have learnt from problem gambling 'experts' here and around the world, I have considered in the light of my own experience and the experiences of the many problem gamblers I have spoken with, both in person and via the Internet.

I currently operate a problem gambling research consultancy, am secretary of Duty of Care (a newly formed non profit, gaming machine consumer advocacy and support group) and am in the process of setting up a self-help / peer support group for people affected by gaming machines. I believe my personal experiences as a person once hooked on gaming machines, combined with my extensive research into the why of gaming machine addiction, make me eminently qualified to comment on the use and benefits of smart cards in reducing problem gambling in South Australia. I am grateful to the Independent Gambling Authority for the opportunity to voice an opinion on this very important issue.

My research to date has led me to the inescapable conclusion that "gambling addiction" and "gaming machine addiction" are different entities. Whilst early researchers studying problem gambling declared all pathological gambling should come under the one DSM category (impulse disorders), it is increasingly becoming clear that gambling addiction and gaming machine addiction have different underlying aetiologies, different courses of progression and different levels of subjective awareness about the cause of the problems excessive gambling causes in the lives of the individuals involved (Breen and Zimmerman, 2002., Breen, 2004).

Unlike most gambling addicts, gaming machine addicts are usually aware from early on in their gambling career that they are spending too much time and money gambling. Many report instituting their own behavioural management systems (freezing their ATM cards in blocks of ice, wearing thongs to and from work etc) in what is often a futile attempt to prevent themselves from responding to the call of the pokies. Many actively attempt to solve their “gambling” problem in this way (with varying degrees of success) for up to two years before approaching problem gambling help services.

The gambling addict on the other hand tends to deny that gambling causes problems in their life. As a result, the gambling addict often has no desire to quit for many years after they begin gambling. They are not motivated to limit their spending while gambling and rarely attempt to restrict their access to gambling venues. Further, people affected by gaming machine addiction blame themselves for the problems their excessive gambling causes themselves and others close to them. So much so that many attempt suicide in a desperate bid to stop the harm they cause themselves and their families. The more traditional gambling addict on the other hand, blames bad luck, poor circumstances and the moral judgements of others for the problems their excessive gambling causes in their lives. The high suicide rate amongst gaming machine addicts – something not commonly seen in other addictions – is testament to the gaming machine addicts propensity to take full and personal responsibility for the consequences of their actions. Unfortunately, the gaming machine addict also has an inability to see what the more traditional gambling addict sees - that our behaviour is as much influenced by the world in which we live and the people around us, as it is freely chosen.

A study exploring South Carolina’s experience following the removal of all gaming machines from the state in 1999, showed that once the gaming machines were removed, people addicted to them did not take up other forms of gambling to feed their addiction (Bridwell and Quinn, 2002). Within three months of the removal of gaming machines from South Carolina, there was a 50% drop in the numbers of people seeking help for their “gambling

addiction". Within 12 months there was an 80 to 90% drop in numbers of problem gamblers in treatment programs and Gamblers Anonymous groups.

Had the thousands of people addicted to gaming machines in South Carolina been addicted to the thrill of gambling, it is logical to assume they would have sought their "fix" through other forms of gambling that were legally (and illegally) available at the time. That the greater majority of people in the state who played the machines excessively did not access other forms of gambling, suggests to me that the thrill of "gambling" is not what attracts and holds the attentions of gaming machine players. That there was no corresponding increase in alcoholism, drug use or other addictions after the machines were banned, suggests that the gaming machine addict does not overly rely on "escapism" or "self-medication" to cope with their depression, stress or relationship problems as early researchers would have us believe.

For the above reasons (and the fact that the number of "problem gamblers" in any region increases tenfold only after gaming machines are introduced and spread widely throughout a community), I support the banning of gaming machines. I consider the purposeful design of gaming machine's to be more than part way responsible for the unacceptable level of "problem gambling" in South Australia and I am yet to be convinced that gaming machines can be made safe for any but the occasional user by the introduction of a pre-commitment, smart card system. Indeed, I have grave concerns about the wisdom of any government or organization that continues to allow the people it is elected to serve and protect to be exposed to a machine so successful in its purposeful design and marketing as an "entertainment product" that it entraps 23.7% of its regular users in a downward spiral of financial devastation and behavioural addiction (Dickerson, 2004).

Having said this, I acknowledge that the Independent Gambling Authority is seeking - through the holding of the inquiry into smart card technologies - to explore how the introduction of a smart card system might best be implemented to eliminate problem gambling and reduce the numbers of problem gamblers, not to explore the wisdom of reducing or eliminating

gaming machines. I will henceforth, try to confine my writing to addressing the terms of reference of the inquiry – in particular how a pre-commitment, smart card system will affect the end user – the regular gambler.

According to Mark Dickerson (2002, 2004) almost one in two regular players of gaming machines report overspending while playing gaming machines despite their pre-session setting of time and monetary spending limits. The “erosion of control” that occurs during play, Dickerson asserts, is both a “natural outcome of regular involvement in the activity” and responsible for the excess losses experienced by gaming machine players.

Today, people in South Australia who self-report having a problem **only** with gaming machines, make up approximately 80% to 90% of the estimated 23,000 problem gamblers in the state. Those who experience problems from betting on the other 14 plus forms of legalized gambling available in S.A. together contribute just 10% to the pool of people directly experiencing harm as a result of excessive gambling.

According to figures gathered during a telephone survey of South Australian households, (Taylor et al, 2001), there are some 3,000 self-reporting gambling addicts and 20,000 self-reporting gaming machine addicts in South Australia. If we consider that most people who know they have a problem with gaming machines are too ashamed or embarrassed to admit to anyone else that they have a problem for at least two years, it will be realized that the actual number of gaming machine addicts – and the percentage difference between people harmed by gaming machines and those harmed by other forms of gambling – is likely to be significantly higher than research shows.

If ‘we’, as a society, are to be effective in reducing the level of “problem gambling” in South Australia and effective in reducing the numbers of people being harmed by excessive gambling, then reducing the incidence of “gaming machine addiction” is what we must deal with first and foremost.

Harm from excessive gambling on electronic gaming machines tends to occur after a significantly shorter period of involvement in the activity than it does in all other forms of gambling. According to Breen and Zimmerman (2002), the latency of onset into problem and pathological gambling in machine gamblers, occurs after just 1.08 years (vs. 3.58 years for 'traditional gamblers').

More recently, anecdotal evidence gathered from female Maori poker machine players who were experiencing difficulties controlling their gambling, indicated that the latency of onset of gaming machine addiction may be as short as twelve weeks after the onset of gambling. My personal experience with gaming machines was similar, I knew I had a problem sticking to pre-determined limits within weeks of beginning to play gaming machines. Subsequently, I spent most of the years between 1995 and 1999 trying on the one hand to stop myself from going to the machines and on the other, choosing to play them and trying without success to stick to the spending limits I set myself prior to each session. A smart card, pre-commitment system might have saved me from developing the "lose control, over spend, feel guilty, chase losses, feel despair" cycle that characterized my addiction.

This shortened addicting period alone makes the task of early intervention into - and prevention of - problem gambling related to poker machines, difficult to achieve. By the time an individual's response to their loss of control is evident to venue staff, their families and even the machine gambler themselves, significant cognitive and behavioural conditioning is likely to have occurred. In particular, "the over spend, feel guilty, chase losses" cycle that predominates in machine gamblers is well on the way to being habitual and beyond conscious control by the time the financial effects are felt and the problem noticed by a third party. Additionally, by the time the individual's loss of control is evident to others, the player themselves are apt to have become "comfortable" with risking significantly larger amounts of money gambling than they would ever been prepared to spend initially.

By preventing over spending - and thus the regret and chasing of losses that follows - the introduction of a mandatory, pre-commitment smart card system

capable of disabling gaming machines for individual players once their predetermined spending limit is reached, should lead to a reduced incidence of loss chasing gambling. In being able to maintain their gambling budgets, all occasional and regular “recreational” consumers of gaming machines are less likely to slip from non-problem gambler to out of control, loss chasing pokies addict.

Had there been a mandatory, pre-commitment system in place when I first began playing the pokies, I believe I would not have become a pokies addict. Before the habituation process took hold, spending \$20 in one night of playing the machines seemed excessive – by the end, spending \$200 in a few hours did not seem unreasonable. Always when entering a gaming room – even at the height of my addiction, I had the best of intentions – to stay for only an hour or two and spend \$50, \$100 or \$200 before going home. Only after playing for a time and my initial stake gone did I begin to rationalize exceeding my intended limits, experience regret for having done so and subsequently begin pouring more coins into the machines in a desperate attempt to recoup what I had already lost.

Having declared that a mandatory pre-commitment, automatic lock out, smart card system might have prevented me from becoming a gaming machine addict had one been in place when I first began playing the machines, I must admit that had one been introduced while I was at the height of my gambling, I may very well have found a way around the restrictions such a system would have placed upon me.

Motivated by my very normal human propensity to repeat behaviours for which I am randomly – and meaningfully – rewarded, I would, I suspect have over committed at the start of each days gambling to maximize the chances of receiving the reward I “knew” would eventually be forthcoming. People whose actions are reinforced by random payout, intermittent reinforcement schedules, are as much victims of their innate human hard wiring, as they are victims of those who manipulate the reinforcement variables in order to shape gambling behaviour and make a profit. Once the connection is made between

pressing a button on a gaming machine and receiving a meaningful monetary reward, ALL humans will find ways to get around any restriction that prevents them from pressing the “spin” button.

For many gaming machine addicts, the money they earn by other means (work, pensions) is either inadequate to meet their needs, or is perceived to be. For pensioners, the unemployed and low-income earners who have no opportunity to augment their meagre incomes by increasing their work hours, only money that is ‘won’ from a gaming machine is considered “real” and adequate to meet their survival needs.

For low-income earners in particular, choosing **not** to risk part of their meagre income means also losing the chance to win money that may free them at least temporarily from crippling debt. For the low income earner, the choice is either to stay mired in the never-ending struggle to pay their rent, electricity, gas bills, food and clothing on \$250 per week income, or risk twenty dollars of it for a chance to win \$200 and live well for a week or two. Even a \$50 win on the back of a \$10 initial stake, can double a pensioners disposable weekly income and start a single parent on a pension on the slippery slope to gaming machine addiction.

Gaming machine addiction causes problems in the lives of people because gaming machine programs are purposely designed to encourage individuals to spend large amounts of cash within a short period of time, and because they are designed to condition those same people to be “comfortable” with doing so. For the gaming machine consumer, the next bet – and therefore the possibility of a win that will get them out of immediate financial trouble – is always just one finger tap away. After half an hour of continuous play, the average gaming machine consumer has made some 350 separate betting decisions (Dickerson, 2004). The fact that human decision making processes do not happen as rapidly as the finger can tap and that the machines can “spin”, display a result and be ready to accept the next bet, in the same amount of time it takes for the human finger to tap, makes gambling on gaming machines a particularly deadly form of gambling. No human can

consciously compare the possible beneficial and harmful consequences of placing another bet against the beneficial and harmful consequences of 'taking the money' and going home in the space of two point three seconds. Even doing so in ten seconds (the average rate of betting on a gaming machine) is nigh on impossible. To expect that any normal human can do so every ten seconds for greater than half an hour without going on autopilot, is unreasonable. Erosion of conscious decision making over time is inevitable for ALL players of gaming machines...so too is the inevitable regret that comes from overspending or "reinvesting" moneys won.

With the introduction of a smart card system, it is my belief that the harmful consequences of mindless gambling that naturally and normally occur in the course of gambling on gaming machines, can be avoided.

For a smart card system to be effective in achieving the aims of,

- Reducing the harms associated with loss of control of spending on gaming machines during gambling sessions,
- Reducing the numbers of people who become addicted to gaming machines,
- Raising consumer awareness of the costs – and risks - of playing gaming machines,
- Preventing underage individuals from gambling,
- Improving the effectiveness of exclusion schemes,

Whilst at the same time, limiting any infringement on,

- The enjoyment of a legal activity by those who do not experience harm as a result of playing gaming machines,
- The rights of licensees and gaming machine operators and their employees to earn a living from the provision of a legal product,

I strongly suggest that any smart card system deemed necessary to reduce the current unacceptable number of people negatively affected by gaming machines include the following;

- **The establishment of a no card, no play system** – machines must not operate without a valid ‘pokies card’ inserted into the machine. I cannot stress strongly enough the necessity of having a system that allows AUTOMATIC shutting down of machines upon the removal of any ‘pokies’ card, as well as when the player’s **net losses** reach the dollar amount they pre-set as what they can afford to lose. This parameter is called for because even the most heavily involved gaming machine addicts report that when they enter a gaming room, they do so with the best of intentions – to spend only what they can afford to lose and stay only a set amount of time. Once they begin playing, their urge to continue often overrides their intention to stop playing once they’ve lost “\$ X”. It then becomes all too easy to rationalize the spending of just, “ten more minutes and \$20 more dollars” before going home. Anything less than a no card, no play system will make the introduction of a smart card system an expensive but useless exercise for the one in two regular players whose ability to make decisions based on reason and logic is eroded as a result of their engagement with gaming machines in what is touted as an entertaining activity of choice.
- **The establishment of a one person, one card system.** All machines must have a valid ‘pokies’ card inserted into the machine AND that the identity of the owner of the card and that of the player “match” before coins can be inserted into the machine and bets made. This regulation will ensure that each customer uses only their own ‘pokies card’, thus facilitating compliance with self-exclusion and preserving the right to privacy and anonymity of all gaming machine consumers. While the use of biometric scanning technology shows great promise in facilitating a one person, one card system, it must be accepted that the technology is still in its infancy and may not be reliable enough at this point to be used. With the rise in identity theft throughout the world, however, biometric scanning technology is a rapidly developing system and it may (by the time a smart card system receives parliamentary approval) be accurate and efficient enough to use. Secondary

alternatives to ensure the player of the machines and the card-owner are one and the same person include the use of pin numbers or code words to be keyed into a key pad upon insertion of a player's card.

- **Proof of age and ID (as required by banks) to be presented by all people applying for a 'pokies card'.** This requirement ensures that underage players do not operate poker machines and that excluded players are not able to obtain a second card under a false identity. Tourists need only supply their passport and / or proof that they normally reside outside South Australia to obtain a card. According to my communication with smart card producers, encrypted identifying details of new registrants can be checked against some two million other registrants in approximately ten minutes – cards can be issued to new registrants within twenty minutes.
- **ALL players must pre-set their daily spend limit before they can operate a gaming machine.** Players should only be allowed to play a gaming machine immediately after their pre-determined limit is registered and the dollar amount each person sets prior to playing a machine should be voluntary. While it has been suggested by people in the concerned sector that a period of delay should occur between the setting of a spend limit and actual playing of a machine, I believe insisting on a delay will be seen by many people as a gross infringement on their rights as non-problem gambling individuals to act spontaneously (not to mention that the gaming machine industry are bound to see it as a gross infringement on their rights to capitalize on that spontaneity).
- **Only one pre-determination (or deposit to the players card) should be allowed each 24-hour period.** For example, if a player sets a daily spend limit at 2350 on Friday and spends it all by 0100 Saturday morning, they must wait until 2350 on Saturday before being able to set another spend limit or deposit more money to their players card. This reduces the likelihood of loss chasing, and builds in a cooling off period for people who win large prizes who often return to a gaming venue the day after their win in the hope of repeating it. The spending of large

wins in this manner inevitably leads the player to later regret their impulsivity and can exacerbate or precipitate loss-chasing gambling.

- **Mandatory on screen display and of a player's monthly gambling activity when prior to the commencement of gambling on any given day.** One screen activity statements should include, dollars won or lost each day of gambling, number of days the players gambled, and number of hours spent gambling over the previous calendar month. A gambling activity statement will ensure all gaming machine consumers are aware of the extent of their spending on gambling in any given month. It enables players to monitor changes in their gambling behaviour. To preserve each player's anonymity, the cardholders name and address should not appear on screen.
- **Machines idle for longer than three minutes must shut down automatically.** Any credits left on the machine when this occurs should be added to the card last inserted. This requirement would cover the issue of cards being inadvertently left behind in a machine by one gambler and any monies credited or pre-committed to that card being "stolen" by another gambler.
- **Automatic interruption of play after continuous use of any machine for greater than thirty minutes by any one individual.** Any credits held on the machine at the commencement of a break in play must not to be able to be transferred to the player's card once the two minute break in play has commenced. At the end of the two minute break, players must confirm their identity, acknowledge an on-screen display of their daily net loss / win and time spent gambling and confirm their desire to continue playing. Mandatory breaks in play affords all gaming machine players the opportunity to take stock of their spending - perhaps leaving to return another day. Regular checking of a player's identity during play reduces the opportunity for any consumer to use a borrowed, black market or stolen card to gamble with. Failure to verify identity, or acknowledge summarised information following a break in play, should result in the automatic 'crediting' of the inserted card with funds left on the machine and the machine shutting down.

- Money remaining in credit on a player's card at the end of their days gambling activity, should be able to be collected from the venue teller or, if the player so chooses, carried forward to be used at another venue or on another day.
- Upon application to the IGA or any gaming room manager for self-exclusion, the applicant's card must immediately be rendered incapable of activating any gaming machine in South Australia for a period of not less than 12 months. The identifying details of all self-excluding players must remain on the system for a minimum period of three years or life if requested. With a smart card system, there will be no need for venue staff to watch out for self-excluding patrons who attempt to gamble and there will be no need to fine those who attempt to gamble. A one player, one card, no card, no play smart card system will make such unworkable and draconian "detect and remove" measures redundant.
- Should a player request to return to playing poker machines after a period of exclusion or banning, a mandatory six-month probationary period should be required. During the probationary period monthly limits must be set - and adhered to - by the player in consultation with a qualified problem gambling financial guidance officer or approved problem gambling counsellor. Before the lifting of the exclusion, the player should be required to set limits on,
 - a) The number of hours per day they can play the machines,
 - b) The number of sessions per month the player has access to the machines,And
 - c) The total money they are able to spend on gambling each day. (N.B. This amount is not to exceed a set percentage of the individual's gross daily income).
- ALL other parameter settings suggested by the various vendors of smart cards systems (including third party interventions by counsellors and gaming room staff) should be voluntary.

- Voluntary parameters, which restrict a player's gambling activity, should take effect immediately after they are requested and remain in place for a minimum of one calendar month.
- Parameters relaxing any voluntarily set restrictions are to take effect no earlier than 72 hours after they are requested.

It has been suggested by various members of the concerned sector (and some members of the gaming machine industry) that third party interventions might be instituted once a player's pre-determined limit is reached, instead of introducing a smart card system that automatically shuts down gaming machines and prevents the player from exceeding the loss limit they set. While I acknowledge the rationale for suggesting a smart card system includes third party interventions, I am of the opinion that these interventions are unlikely to be any more common - or successful - in preventing people addicted to playing the machines from playing them than the current "responsible gambling counsellor" interventions the gaming industry plan to introduce. They are certainly unlikely to be any more successful than the gaming room staff interventions the industry have purportedly had in place for some time. I have yet to meet or speak with any person from South Australia who has experienced - or still is experiencing - problems as a result of their gambling, who has had a gaming room staff member intervene in a way that stops them from gambling. Most report that staff actively avoid them - particularly when the gambler is on a losing streak.

In what is often a last ditch effort to stop playing gaming machines, to limit their losses and reinforce abstinence from gambling, many problem gamblers turn to self-exclusion. I did not - and have not - availed myself of this service. Early on in my recovery process, I realized the difficulties of anyone - security personnel or otherwise - recognizing my face from the hundreds that walk through the door of a gaming room in a day. It was, I realized, hard enough to find a friend I knew to be in a crowded casino, let alone find a stranger I was not sure would be there.

The expectation that staff of gaming machine venues would recognize me – an insignificant and unimportant stranger - and intervene to stop me from playing the pokies, was laughable. Something that just wasn't going to happen. I could not - at the time I became aware of the "service" – see why security personnel would have cause to notice me and I could not have faced another failure should I have asked a venue to stop me gambling and they had failed to do so.

Anecdotal reports from problem gamblers who have self-excluded and subsequently re-entered gaming rooms in South Australia, is that they have, in most instances simply gone to venues other than those from which they have excluded thereby avoiding detection.

Since I've 'gone public' with my story, I have been into gaming rooms, put money into a machine and sat in front of a machine for over an hour. Despite my face being plastered all over the television and public awareness of my past problem being well known, despite the fact that I was not playing the machine, not one staff member of a venue has ever approached me, asked me what I was doing or suggested I go home. My experience, like that of many self-excluders has been that my presence in a gaming room apparently 'playing' a machine, evokes no interest or concern from the staff or management.

Reports like these make it clear to me that current procedures that rely on gaming room staff and security personnel to detect and remove self-excluders from gaming rooms is ineffective. Where the system fails to prevent gaming machine addicts from gambling, it is the people most in need of external intervention to help them control their behaviour who are the ones the most harmed by the inadequate detection and removal system. If they raise the issue of a venues failure to prevent them from gambling, they risk being fined...if the self-excluded gambler does not raise a venues failure to detect and remove them, who will ensure their compliance with the self-exclusion contracts they willingly sign?

The introduction of a smart card system capable of preventing gaming machines from operating will facilitate self-exclusion, exclusions instituted by family members of gaming machine addicts and venue induced exclusion of difficult patrons and those assessed by gaming room staff to be “problem gamblers”. It will also absolve gaming room staff from the difficult, challenging – and sometimes onerous – task of recognizing, approaching and removing excluded patrons from the venue. Equally, a smart card system will protect the venue owners from being sued for failing to do that which they have agreed to do in self-exclusion contracts.

To guarantee the success of each of the three forms of barring available in South Australia, a one person, one card; no card, no play system is a MUST. Without these parameters being mandatory, a smart card system will not, in my opinion, achieve any more reduction of problem gamblers in South Australia – or prevent barred players from gambling than the currently operating J-Card system has since its inception.

In the system I propose, both the gaming machine addict and people who believe they need gambling wins to survive, will be able to overcommit at the start of each days gambling session. Whilst arbitrary controls are possible with all smart card systems offered at the open day on February 15th (e.g. requiring all registrants to declare their income and living costs, calculate their disposable income and only allowing registrants to spend a given percentage of their disposable income) it is my belief that any system that is introduced that includes the mandatory setting of all possible parameters will infringe on the rights and sensibilities of occasional and recreational gamblers who do not experience problems consequential to excessive spending on gaming machines. Further, mandatory setting of all possible parameters will - without doubt - evoke strong public condemnation of the introduction of any smart card system, thereby putting at risk the introduction of a system that not only may reduce the harm causing attributes of gaming machines (excessive spending) but allows the greatest possible freedom of individuals to enjoy the gaming machine gambling experience.

Can a pre-commitment, smart card system reduce the numbers of problem gamblers in South Australia? I believe it can - by assisting new and regular, non-problem consumers of gaming machine services to stick to their predetermined spend limits. I do not foresee any sudden and dramatic reduction in numbers of problem gamblers in the short term – a gaming machine addict, caught in a desperate struggle between wanting to quit and wanting to regain control of their gambling without losing the opportunity to supplement their income, may find a way to continue gambling in hope of their efforts being rewarded. Some gaming machine addicts may use the system I've suggested to help them quit – others may not. As a former pokies addict, I will register for a pokies card – and immediately thereafter, ban myself for life.

In my personal opinion, the value of a mandatory registration and mandatory pre-commitment system lies primarily in its ability to prevent new gaming machine players from becoming habituated to (and 'comfortable' with) losing large amounts of money in short periods of time, thus reducing the likelihood that new and non-problem gamblers will descend into the "loose control, over spend, feel ashamed, chase losses" cycle so predominant in gaming machine addiction. As a result, I suggest that over time, there will be fewer "new" gaming machine addicts created to take the place of the 20,000 South Australians who suffer from gaming machine addiction as they in turn reach bottom and quit.

The introduction of a smart card system, electronically monitored and managed by an independent authority is likely in my considered opinion, to be an effective method of early intervention and prevention of the harms associated with excessive access to gaming machines.

The introduction of a pre-commitment, one person, one card, no card, no play, smart card system is **not** however, a guaranteed solution to the gaming machine addiction issue. While people are still allowed unlimited exposure - and convenient access to - the behaviour shaping, cognitively manipulative properties purposely programmed into the computer generated gambling machines we know as 'the pokies', some individuals are still going to develop

an addiction to playing them. The way humans are hard wired to learn guarantees it.

The questions that still beg to be answered are, how many people will develop an addiction to the pokies as I did and what might they have to say in the future when they realize that the government had all the evidence they needed to show that the machines were addictive in and of themselves and yet chose to allow them to remain widely available, easily accessible and introduce a smart card rather than ban them all together? What will the future addicts say when they discover that the government did nothing to remove these known to be addictive machines? What will they say when they realize that they need never have suffered the pain, shame, stress and financial devastation that they have if not for the governments failure to protect them from harm by banning the machines?

I thank you for considering my submission.

Ms S. B. Pinkerton. RN
Problem gambling Research Consultant
Sue.P.R.N.
Secretary, Duty of Care inc
Former Pokies Addict
P.O. Box 91
PARA HILLS
S.A. 5096

References:

Breen, Robert B. and Zimmerman, Mark. 2002. "Rapid Onset of Pathological Gambling in Machine Gamblers", *Journal of Gambling Studies*, 18, 31-43

Breen, R.B., 2004. "Rapid Onset Of Pathological Gambling In Machine Gamblers: A Replication". *eCOMMUNITY: International Journal of Mental Health & Addiction*, 2(1). <http://www.ecommunity-journal.com/content/full/2/1/7>

Bridwell, R. Randall and Quinn, Frank L., 2002. "From Mad Joy To Misfortune: The Merger Of Law And Politics In The World Of Gambling". *Mississippi Law Journal*. Spring, 2002. pp565-729

Dickerson, M., 2003, "Exploring The Limits Of 'Responsible Gambling': Harm Minimisation Or Consumer Protection? *Gambling Research (Journal of the National association for Gambling Studies Australia)*, 15, 29-44

Dickerson, M., 2004. "Measurement and modeling of impaired control: implications for policy". Presented 5th.Oct.2004: Insight International Problem Gambling Conference, Nova Scotia.
<http://www.nsgamingfoundation.org/main/presentations/Professor%20Mark%20Dickerson.pdf>

Taylor, A. et al., 2001, "Gambling Patterns of South Australians and Associated Health Indicators".
<http://www.health.sa.gov.au/library/Portals/0/gambling-patterns-sa.pdf>