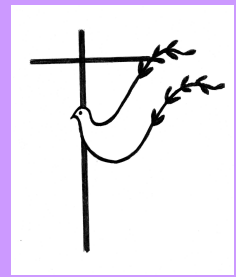


GAMBLING



Issues Sheet Two: Fairer Tasmania Series

June 2004

Tasmanian Catholic Justice and Peace Commission

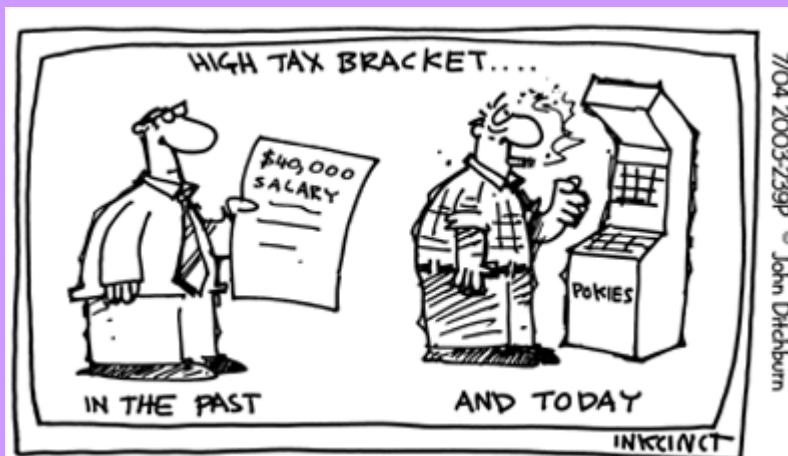
- *"I spent my husband's - \$400- in two hours. I remember walking out of there thinking 'what have I done?' - he's good to me. He never abuses me or hurts me and I've done this. I couldn't face it so I took myself off and I was going to kill myself. There wasn't any choice. But for some reason my husband came looking for me and he found me. ... I'm over it now.*
- *"It's a habit- you think you'll get away, you'll be free- but one day I spent my pension and was left with \$30 for the rest of the fortnight. I walked out and thought 'why did I do that?'"*

Quotes from the *Just Tasmania* forums quoted in *Legislative Council Select Committee on Impact of Gaming Machines*, December 2002, page 28

Time and chance happen to all, but some seem required by the Tasmanian community to bare the burden of desperation and poor fortune. Gambling is a social phenomenon tied up with a long history and both positive and negative community consequences. The Tasmanian Catholic Justice and Peace Commission sides with the most vulnerable of Tasmanians and with a consensus of Christian churches to express concern about these consequences. The gambling industry contributes greatly to the Tasmanian economy and the Government itself is a major beneficiary through taxation. Yet the suffering of those with a severe or even moderate gambling problem (and the suffering of their families) offer the longest odds for all Tasmanians.

"Gambling is the seeking of gain at the expense of others, based solely on chance. Because it results in the transfer of valuable goods it can have a significant effect on the quality of life of those who indulge in it. Inevitably some gain while others lose. In most cases a third party in the form of the promoter of the activity is the significant beneficiary. Thus gambling is not simply an innocent pastime. It has the potential to divert significant resources from other and more useful activities. It opens the way for some to profit from the weakness of others. These characteristics of gambling have made it a long-standing concern of the churches."

- National Council of Churches in Australia Executive Statement on Gambling, July 2000



"Again I saw that under the sun the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor bread to the wise, nor riches to the intelligent, nor favour to the skilful; but time and chance happen to them all.

Ecclesiastes 9:11

Fact File

- “Over the past 6 years, 2233 poker machines have been rolled out in clubs and hotels, on average one for every 139 Tasmanians of gambling age. Prior to this, 1079 poker machines were located in the casinos in Hobart and Launceston. Today, turnover on poker machines is approximately \$1.7 billion per year, with \$850 million of this from machines in clubs and pubs. Tasmanians lose more than \$80 million each year on the machines at clubs and pubs. Poker machines provide substantial income via taxes and fees to the State: \$41 million in 2001-2002, which is approximately 5 per cent of State-sourced taxation revenue.” (The Emperor’s New Clothes, Social Action and Research Centre Anglicare, August 2003)
- Around 130 000 Australians (about 1 per cent of the adult population) are estimated to have severe problems with their gambling. A further 160 000 are estimated to have moderate problems, which may not require treatment but warrant concern (together 2.1% of Australian adults). (Productivity Commission, 1999)
- Problem gamblers comprise 15 per cent of regular (non-lottery) gamblers and account for about \$3.5 billion in expenditure annually- about one-third of the gambling industries’ market. (Productivity Commission, 1999)
- Problem gamblers lose on average around \$12 000 each per year. (Productivity Commission, 1999)
- In a recent survey of Tasmanian adults 81 per cent believed the current number of poker machines ought to be reduced and 38 per cent knew someone who had serious gambling problems connected with poker machines. (Anglicare Poker Machine Survey, August 2003)

Sources

Anglicare Poker Machine Survey, August 2003

Cartoon by John Ditchburn, Inkcinct, (2003_239P 7 April, 2003)

http://www.giant.net.au/users/inkcinct/Web/Australian_Cartoons_List/

Legislative Council Select Committee on Impact of Gaming Machines, December 2002

The Emperor’s New Clothes, Social Action and Research Centre Anglicare, August 2003

Productivity Commission, *Australia’s Gambling Industries*, Canberra: AusInfo, 1999

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

1. Become more aware of the related issues
2. Use judgement free language when talking about ‘problem gamblers’.
3. Encourage community activities which avoid gambling, finding alternative ways to raise funds and socialise.
4. Write to local, state or Federal representatives using this Issue Sheet
5. Spread the word about this Issue Sheet and the TCJPC.

USEFUL WEBSITES

www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au
www.anglicare-tas.org.au/
www.tascoss.org.au/
www.centacare.com/

USEFUL READING

The TCJPC recommends *The Emperor’s New Clothes*, Social Action and Research Centre Anglicare, August 2003 and the report of the Legislative Council Select Committee.

HOW TO CONTACT THE TCJPC

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