



**December 2010**

## **Gambling news from around the world (From our members)**

### Australia

There have been some major developments on gambling policy, particularly in the political context, in Australia over recent months. The Australian Productivity Commission released its second report on gambling in Australia at the end of February this year ([www.pc.gov.au](http://www.pc.gov.au)) and key recommendations included:

- Establishment of a universal pre-commitment scheme, for electronic gaming machines (EGMs / pokies) to be introduced by 2016
- Liberalisation of online and interactive gaming
- Placing a one dollar bet limit per EGM 'spin' and a \$120 per hour spending limit
- Removing automatic teller machines (ATM's) from gaming rooms
- Reducing trading hours for EGM venues
- Establishing a collaborative research venture with New Zealand, disbanding the current research arrangement

The Australian Government formally responded to the Productivity Commission's report in late June, rejecting the recommendation regarding liberalising online and interactive gaming, but saying relatively little about the other recommendations.

On the 24<sup>th</sup> of June, the Australian Prime Minister was replaced, and thus the Productivity Commission's report and government responses received very little media coverage or public debate.

An election was called for the 21<sup>st</sup> of August, delivering a 'hung parliament', with neither major political party able to form a government in their own right. The Labor Party eventually formed government with the support of five Independents in the lower house, the House of Representatives. One of these Independents, Andrew Wilkie, had run on a strong gambling harm reduction platform during his campaign, and so

negotiated with the Labor Party for guarantees on gambling reform as part of his support to form government. The key changes Andrew Wilkie demanded were:

- Implementation of a gambling pre-commitment program by 2014
- \$250 per day withdrawal limit from ATMs in gambling venues.

Shortly after forming government, and to honour the commitment with Andrew Wilkie, the Council of Australian Governments (COAG - Prime Minister of the national government and Premiers / Chief Ministers from each State and Territory) announced the creation of a Select Council on Gambling Reform.

On 21<sup>st</sup> October, Hon Jenny Macklin MP, Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and

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Indigenous Affairs and Hon Bill Shorten MP Assistant Treasurer, announced the creation of a Ministerial Expert Advisory Group on Gambling. The media release stated:

Twenty-two people have been selected to advise the Australian Government on its gambling reforms through a new expert panel .... from:

- problem gambling counselling and support services;
- clubs, hotels, casinos and gaming machine manufacturers;
- the Liquor Hospitality and Miscellaneous Union; and
- research and academic institutions that specialise in understanding problem gambling behaviour and harm minimisation measures.

The group will consider key issues such as the implementation of a best practice, full pre-commitment scheme on poker machines, the roll out of poker machine dynamic warning and cost of play displays and establishing ATM withdrawal limits in venues with poker machines (excluding casinos).

The group will be guided by the latest evidence on gambling and will seek advice from other stakeholders where necessary.

Tomorrow the Council of Australian Government's (COAG) Select Council on Gambling Reform, which includes Treasurers, Ministers responsible for gambling regulation, and Ministers responsible for community services, will meet for the first time to develop national solutions to minimise harm from problem gambling.

The Australian Government has committed to work with the states and territories, industry and the community sector to progress a national response to the recommendations of the Productivity Commission Report on Gambling.

The Productivity Commission estimates that there are between 80,000 and 160,000 problem gamblers in Australia. In addition there are between 230,000 and 350,000 people at moderate risk.

Problem gambling destroys lives - not only the life of the problem gambler but also the lives of their families and friends."

The expert panel includes six people from community organisations, one of whom, Kate Roberts, is a member of GAPHA.

The expert panel had its first meeting on 8<sup>th</sup> November and will meet about three more times before reporting in March 2011. The Select Council has also called for submissions, particularly relating to its major issues; pre-commitment and ATM withdrawal limits. Submissions are required by the end of January 2011, with it likely that the Australian governments will be making decisions on these two elements of gaming reform, at least, by mid 2011.

Prior to the election in August, the Australian upper house of Parliament, the Senate, had conducted an inquiry into online and interactive gambling. It is currently unclear as to whether further work will be undertaken in the foreseeable future, regarding online and interactive gambling.

The gambling industry is mobilising strongly to minimise the impacts of any proposals that are mooted! Still, there will be plenty of gambling policy debate, particularly about pre-commitment over the next 6 months in Australia.

Mark Henley  
November 2010.

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## KOREA

The Korean National Gaming Control Commission held an international conference on 13th September, addressing the questions of national policy for harm minimization and laws and systems for customer protection.

Over recent years Korean gambling has been dominated by casino gambling with a strong push coming on Korean authorities to approve casinos for the lucrative Asian 'high roller' market. Korea has approved construction and licensing of 16 casinos throughout the Korean peninsula, however local Korean citizens are only allowed in one of these 16 casinos. This approach attempts to gain economic benefit through employment in casinos whilst limiting problem gambling through having an almost exclusively international tourist clientele.

Traditional gambling games and elements of sports betting, including wagering on bicycle racing are

widespread throughout the Korean population and these are then gaming issues that the Gaming Control Commission help services mainly deal with.

Of particular interest is the growing area of online and interactive gambling. While online gambling is illegal in South Korea, the following newspaper extract from first of October 2008 indicates the dilemmas with online gambling regulation:

"SEOUL -- As reported by the Agence France Presse: "South Korean prosecutors have busted an online gambling ring operated by Koreans from the Philippine capital Manila which cleared some 100 million dollars over 18 months, officials said Tuesday.

The Seoul Central Prosecutors' Office said four South Koreans have been charged. "...On-line gambling is illegal in South Korea and regular gambling is strictly limited, with only one casino in Korea open to locals..."

As a 'highly wired' country with a ready Internet access and high speeds, another gambling issue is emerging; quoting from another newspaper article:

"The South Korean Government is considering a "gaming curfew" to curb the addictions of its online game-besotted youth, "Throwing StarCraft matches and illegal betting, however, is a bigger deal. In what some are already calling the biggest e-sports scandal in history, the still-unfolding saga has seen pro gaming teams in South Korea accused of intentionally losing matches It is believed to have started in 2006 and peaked in 2008."

In other words the distinction between gaming and gambling is blurring, as it would appear that some young people are gambling, within on-line role playing and related games.

One of the issues addressed at the conference was the question of appropriate on line and interactive gambling regulation, when it is such a global, and therefore international, activity. International collaboration is going to be

needed to at least develop protocols and minimum standards for on line gambling. Then there would be some capacity to consider multilateral regulatory and compliance mechanisms.

Perhaps a starting point is to ask which international bodies would be appropriate places to start on line regulation discussions: G20, UN, IMF, ASEAN, European Union or a different body? The second equally difficult question is what the content should be of any internationally agreed on line gambling consumer protection protocol, code of practice or standard?

These important questions need further consideration by group like the Gambling and Public Health Alliance international and policy makers.

Mark Henley  
November 2010.

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## 8<sup>th</sup> European Conference on Gambling Studies and Policy Issues

**Philip Townshend PGFNZ**

Graeme Ramsey and Philip Townshend attended this conference on behalf of the Problem Gambling Foundation of NZ, the conference had an internet gambling focus. Gambling on the internet is resented by the land based gambling industry as they can't compete with the lower overheads and lack of regulation and by regulators who have trouble taxing it. Both Graeme and I gave presentations to the conference; mine on Internet Gambling and Graeme's on the NZ Public Health approach, these presentations have been independently put up on the PGF web page.

Attending an event like this is a culture shock for a NZer. Firstly the conference is significantly funded by the gambling industry and it's interesting to see how they get their money's worth through participation on various panels and presentations during the program. Also the health promotion aspect is almost absent and community advocacy is completely absent from the discussion to the extent that they don't even understand these issues.

The deafening lack of health promotion content at the conference led to an epiphany for me about how we get the gambling discussion wrong. When we use the word gambling the ing makes it a verb which in turn makes us focus on the people doing it rather than the products they do it with. Were our colleagues in the substance use area to focus on verbs they would have conferences on "using", "injecting", "smoking" or "drinking. We need a word to describe the gambling area that's not a verb to help us focus on the products and the activity not just the people doing it- unfortunately what that word is wasn't included in the epiphany.

Before the conference I attended a workshop on Rehabilitative Gambling Courts presented by Judge Farrell called Merging Compulsive Gambling Treatment and the Criminal Justice System

Judge Farrell runs specific courts for AOD, ASPD (War Veterans), Domestic violence, Gambling and also a criminal court in New York where he and another Judge preside over about 40,000 cases a year. He discussed an aspect of this system I had never thought about- that Judges in the US are elected and candidates are more likely to get elected if they promise a hard line on crime- longer sentences etc so running a rehabilitative Court is a real achievement.

The aim of the Gambling Court is to identify problem gambling and change the gamblers gambling behavior in order to prevent further crime and reduce recidivism. They use the protocols from drug courts (available on line at [www.nadcp.org](http://www.nadcp.org)). Judge Farrell noted the importance of a comprehensive Gambling / Mental health / AOD assessment that accurately assesses the likelihood of the offender changing and recommends the best fit treatment options which are often inpatient treatment programs. He described the Courts as involving "significant theatre and having involvement with clients over a 1-3 year period.

The court works very strongly from a disease model and abstinence basis of addiction. Farrell suggested this may be an advance over the predominant US view that problem gambling is a 'character flaw'. He recommended further reading at: Therapeutic courts Notre Dame Law Review 1/99 and Georgia law review vol 42, 3, 2008 problem solving courts in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

One feature of the conference was multiple simultaneous breakout sessions which made choosing what to see a problem as there were always competing interesting sessions. Graeme and I tried to not attend the same sessions and we have described the sessions attended in a full report on the conference available on the PGF web site.

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### Gambling worldwide





## the last pokie

### Join the Gambling and Public Health Alliance International

**Connect** with Alliance members around the world dedicated to reducing and eliminating gambling related harm.

**Partner** with Alliance members internationally on issues relating to reducing gambling harm.

**Share** knowledge and information about international developments in legislation, policy and programmes to utilise in the task of reducing gambling harm.

**Benefit** from the support and advice provided by Alliance members worldwide.

**Receive** regular electronic newsletters and keep up-to-date with news from other members around the world on developments and issues in their region or country.

**Membership to the Alliance is free.** The Alliance receives no funding or support from the gambling industry.

[www.gaphai.org](http://www.gaphai.org)

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