



## Secrecy fears on gambling research

By Kenneth Nguyen

December 17, 2004

### Anti-gambling campaigners are wary of rules for the Government's new gaming advisory council.

The State Government will not be required to publish research by its new gaming advisory council, strengthening fears among anti-gambling campaigners that the Government is stifling debate about problem gambling.

The new Ministerial Advisory Council, which will have representatives from the gaming industry and the community, is replacing the independent Gambling Research Panel, which consisted of three academics.

While a key function of the now-defunct panel was to "publish the results of (its) research" into problem gambling, that requirement is not in new legislation, passed this week, establishing the council.

The Government has also voted down an Opposition amendment that would have required the council to table its reports in Parliament.

Anti-gambling campaigners yesterday expressed dismay at the Government's decision.

"This suggestion that (research) will not be publicly tabled by right is very unfortunate," Interchurch Gambling Taskforce chairman John Dalziel said.

"Publicly funded research should be publicly available, especially in light of the very grave public concerns with the excess of gambling opportunities in this state.

"The whole research question is shrouded in uncertainty and mystery at the moment, and this legislation certainly doesn't clarify that."

Mike Hill, chairman of Community Action on Pokie Problems, said: "One of the things CAPP has been arguing for most strenuously is full publication of any research, because that's the way of making sure that it's actually acted upon."

Publication of reports by the new body will be at the discretion of the Government.

Gaming Minister John Pandazopoulos defended the new structure yesterday.

"We are going to continue publishing gambling research that is commissioned by the new ministerial council," he said.

But shadow gaming minister Ken Smith said there was no legislative safeguard to ensure that all research would be released - in particular, research that might be critical of the Government.

Damning research released by the old panel included a 2003 report that found that self-exclusion regimes for problem gamblers were ineffective, and a survey released in May this year that found 90 per cent of Victorians wanted a cut in the number of poker machines.

The panel was disbanded before it could start a planned study on links between gambling and crime.

In October, the panel's outgoing chairwoman, Linda Hancock, said the involvement of gaming industry representatives on the new council could restrict gambling research to "safe, non-controversial issues that won't threaten government revenue".

Despite a ban on poker machine advertising from January, gambling taxes are expected to contribute \$1.39 billion to government coffers in 2003-04, up \$67 million.

Companies including Crown Casino, Tabcorp and Tattersalls are expected to vie for positions on the council.

#### **Our Advertisers**

[Rent DVDs Online 30 Day FREE Trial](#)

[Receive 5,000 points with ANZ Frequent Flyer Visa](#)

[Open a Savings Maximiser and receive a \\$15 bonus deposit!](#)

#### **More news**

- [Spirit of Christmas makes way for Scrooge](#)
- [Credit card debt drives spending binge](#)
- [State moves to save gums](#)

[Home](#) > [National](#) > Article

Copyright © 2004. The Age Company Ltd.