

**Public Accounts Committee
ACT Legislative Assembly
GPO Box 1020, Canberra, ACT 2601**

9 February 2012

	A.C.T. LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE OFFICE
SUBMISSION NUMBER	7
DATE AUTH'D FOR PUBLICATION	27.2.12

Re: *Inquiry into the Gaming Machine Amendment Bill 2011*

Key Issues – Small and Non-Aligned Clubs in the ACT

There are 15 small clubs in the ACT and the ACT Rugby Union Club (RUC) is one of those with 7,500 members. The RUC is a non-aligned club and is situated in Barton ACT.

A few thoughts from the RUC and one view from an independent club:

1. The transferability of machines leaves out non-aligned clubs. Independent clubs are stuck in no-man's land. We have no chance to sell machines and no chance to acquire more which is a pretty bleak prospect for small clubs looking to grow or to reinvent themselves without poker machines;
2. The ATM legislation affects us directly – given the lack of banking facilities in the area, that far from going on gambling, a significant proportion of funds withdrawn are not spent in the club. We support either no limits for clubs with less than 35 machines and/or time based limits. And call into question whether the technology exists to enforce the rule if there are multiple cash suppliers within the club.
3. The aspirational goal of reducing the cap from 5000 machines to 4000 machines through "natural attrition" necessarily affects small and independent club particularly with reference to 1. And 2. above.

The lack of a pool works against even minor growth in the independent clubs as does the lack of a buyback program for clubs wanting to try life without pokies

We would like to see the governments and the committee's views on the role of small clubs within the Canberra community the ability of non-aligned clubs to obtain poker machines for greenfield sites in the ACT or to alter the current number of machines in these clubs.

We recognise that some of these moves will benefit the bigger clubs but the government seems to have forgotten about the smaller clubs with a particular sporting or community focus that struggle with very small margins and the increasing weight of legislation focussed on high turn-over clubs and pubs.

The small clubs sector has been neglected in recent years and if the government is serious about a continued role for small clubs in the community then some more policy thinking is needed. As a suggestion, discounts for small clubs in the areas of deconcessionalising leases and betterment tax may open up an alternate future for those clubs thinking about life without gaming.

Thank you for hearing our views, I would be happy to provide further information to the Committee if required.

Jeremy Wilcox
Vice President, Clubs ACT/Secretary Manager, ACT Rugby Union Club

