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CATE FAEHRMANN

NSW GREENS MP

**THE
GREENS**

15 April 2020

The Hon. Victor Dominello, MP
Member of the Legislative Assembly
Member for Ryde
Minister for Customer Service
Member of the Liberal Party

By Email

Dear Minister,

I write with regards to the increased risks posed to individuals and families from alcohol and gambling as a result of Covid-19 and request that you take steps to limit access during this period.

With most of NSW confined to their homes, the government has acknowledged the risk posed to community safety by predicted increases in domestic violence, substance abuse and mental health issues.

Online Alcohol availability

I have connected with advocacy groups who are concerned at the industry's response to revenue loss from reduced consumption by expanding their online offering. Liquor delivery is available from some businesses up to 11pm, with the additional enticement of fast turnarounds and extensive discounting. Research points to a link between the lateness that alcohol is purchased with a higher risk of domestic violence. Further, sites have lax ID checking protocols with purchases only requiring a credit card and date of birth allowing underage customers to easily circumvent age restrictions.

Online Gambling

While I acknowledge that problem gambling is a trickier area to address, it cannot be overlooked as it leads to psychological distress and even suicide. Evidence shows that most gamblers who use physical machines or book-making agencies also use online gambling providers. Online wagering sites such as Ladbrokes and Sportsbet have shown a willingness to extend their

betting events to novelty outcomes in order to retain consumers after the cancellation of many sporting activities. New social gaming apps are astoundingly popular and use in-app purchases to avoid gambling regulations while absorbing 100% of players' winnings.

As you well aware, COVID-19 is causing anxiety and isolation amongst the population, as well as job loss and economic insecurity. These pressures come with an increased likelihood of turning to alcohol or gambling to reduce feelings of stress and unhappiness. With our health system already straining under the demands of the pandemic, it is essential that preventative measures are put in place to reduce additional loading from alcohol and gambling related injury.

I would like to suggest the below list of recommendations devised in collaboration with relevant experts and not-for-profit agencies to reduce harm during these difficult times:

Online Alcohol Delivery:

- Implement ID checks for online orders at point of purchase and delivery;
- Ban deliveries past 8pm;
- Ban immediate delivery services, implement 6-hour lead time;
- Place limit on deliveries per household to one per day;
- Place a bottle limit on customer orders to reduce stockpiling;
- Remove minimum order requirements to prevent over-ordering;
- Monitor and limit advertising and discounting.

Online Gambling:

- Monitor and limit novelty betting and excessive advertising from TAB and Sportsbet;
- Invest in treatment and rehab programs during COVID-19, targeting gambling victims via online promotion;
- Lobby the federal government to
 - a. Fasttrack blocking internet pokies;
 - b. Promote and advertise online bank tools that allow self-exclusion from online gambling and have this extended to the Apple Store;
- Shut down racing events;
- Develop an industry plan with cabinet to encourage venues to return to operations with a reduced reliance on pokies revenue, including reviewing and amending cap, and implementing a floating cap.

We will all be facing complexities due to social isolation over the coming months those who are already managing addictive behaviours need more support than ever to protect themselves and their families. I look forward to your response to these matters and would welcome a discussion with you at your earliest convenience.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Kate Todd', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Cate Faehrmann MLC
Greens NSW spokesperson for Hospitality, Liquor, and Gambling