

21 July 2021

NSW must not issue Crown casino licence until Royal Commissions end

The Alliance for Gambling Reform is calling on the New South Wales regulator (ILGA) to wait for the Victorian and WA Royal Commissions into Crown to hand down their final recommendations before making any decisions on the company's casino licence application at Barangaroo.

Alliance Chief Advocate, the Rev Tim Costello, said it was imperative no decisions be made yet on the Barangaroo licence given what has come out at the Victorian and WA Royal Commissions.

"In her NSW inquiry, Patricia Bergin found that Crown was not suitable to hold a casino licence for Barangaroo. That was back in February this year. We've had the Victorian and Western Australian Royal Commissions into Crown underway since then and they've found even more evidence of the breaching of regulations and obligations by this casino giant," Rev Costello said.

"The money laundering and other shady dealings by Crown revealed through the Bergin Inquiry were bad enough. The Royal Commissions have revealed even more egregious impropriety by the company, and their staff at their behest. I knew the culture at Crown was awful before these inquiries, but the revelations that have come out have shocked even me. Their behaviour has been appalling.

"I was over the moon to have the Counsel Assisting the Victorian Royal Commission yesterday say that Crown was not fit to hold a casino licence in Victoria. If they're not fit to hold a licence there after decades of operations, then they certainly are not fit to start a new casino in NSW.

"That's why NSW must commit to not issuing a casino licence for Barangaroo before the findings of the two Royal Commissions underway into Crown are complete."

Counsel Assisting Adrian Finanzio SC alleged yesterday Crown had deliberately broken the law, avoided taxes and repeatedly fought the regulator when it tried to police illegal behaviour.

He said it was a company with *"a preparedness to conduct illegal, misleading and unethical transactions, a preparedness to breach both Victorian laws and those of other countries, a tendency to consider the lawfulness of conduct as a measure of risk rather than compliance, and a tendency, whether deliberate or otherwise, to find ways of circumventing AML (anti-money laundering) monitoring and scrutiny, and preparedness to keep things from the regulator"*.

"It doesn't get much more damning than that," Rev Costello said. "It took far too long for Victoria to investigate Crown effectively, but now that it's finally happened the revelations cannot be ignored.

"NSW did the right thing by running the Bergin Inquiry, which started the ball rolling, and I applaud them for that. Victoria and WA had been turning a blind eye for years. Now the right thing for NSW to do is to wait and see what the final recommendations from these Royal Commissions are before making any decisions on the Barangaroo casino licence."

Rev Costello said ideally no casino licence would be issued for Barangaroo.

"Enough has come out about the whole shady Barangaroo deal to say that it should never have been done, and most certainly was not in the best interests of the people of NSW," he said. "Sydney doesn't need another casino. They are a drain on communities and the economy.

"If the NSW Government goes down the path of issuing a casino licence to another company for Barangaroo they need to be extremely careful about a monopoly situation being created. Monopolies are awful at the best of times, but when you're talking about an exploitative and predatory industry like gambling, they are downright dangerous.

"There is no obligation on the NSW Government to issue another casino licence. They could take a real stand against the devastation gambling has wreaked on their state to date and just say no."

Media contact: Rebecca Thorpe on 0491 209 436 or rebecca.thorpe@agr.org.au
See [here](#) for a gambling language guide for journalists.