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Communities getting bare minimum from pokie trusts

The Problem Gambling Foundation is questioning why many pokie trusts are unable to return to communities any more than the minimum amount of gaming machine proceeds that they are required to by law.

Graeme Ramsey, Problem Gambling Foundation CEO, says it appears as though many trusts are using the legal minimum rate of return as a target rather than trying to maximise returns to the community as the Gambling Act requires.

"A few trusts are returning over 50 per cent of gaming machine proceeds to the community. That shows that it can be done if trusts set out to maximise the return to the community. Why then are most only returning the 37.12 per cent, or very close to it, that they are required to under the law?" he says.

Graeme Ramsey says the rest of the money after taxes goes on trust administration or to venues as reimbursement for expenses.

"From the DIA results published in the latest Gambits magazine, it looks as if some trusts are doing their best to ensure that venues and their own operations get as much as possible rather than the community. Given the sums of money involved this is a big incentive for keeping these dangerous products in our communities," he says.

"The Gambling Act places a clear requirement on trusts to operate as efficiently as possible so that as much money as possible gets to communities. When even some of the biggest trusts cannot return much above the minimum required, questions must be asked. Unlike other bodies dealing with public money, little information is available for the public to see how trusts are operated and where the money goes."

Graeme Ramsey says the system of distributing pokie money through trusts is fundamentally flawed and a new robust, open and transparent system is clearly needed.

A snapshot of annual figures published by the DIA in the April *Gambits* magazine shows that from the total gaming machine proceeds of over \$601 million just over \$249 million was returned to the community.

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