

GLAI welcome inclusion of Private Members Gaming Clubs in draft AML Bill

28th July 09: The Gaming & Leisure Association of Ireland (GLAI) today broadly welcome inclusion of Private Member Gaming Clubs in the draft Criminal Justice (Money Laundering) Bill 2009 as announced today by The Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform, Mr. Dermot Ahern T.D.

David Hickson, Director of the GLAI, said “we welcome this inclusion of Private Member Gaming Clubs in the draft Bill, we see it as a first step to regulating the sector and look forward to working with the Minister and his Department to ensure that the regime in place will allow responsible operators to provide consumers with a credible, safe and well regulated environment. We have long called for regulation as a means to create jobs, maximize tax returns to the Exchequer and to provide proper consumer protection”.

The GLAI has lobbied tirelessly for regulation of the sector since 2005. In the absence of a licensing system for members the GLAI have worked to a voluntary code of conduct while competing in a legal grey-area with a small number of competing Private Member Gaming Clubs not abiding by any self-regulatory code. David Hickson commented “we welcome the Ministers intention to conduct a wider review of the overall gambling industry and, in accordance with recent requests, will be preparing submissions to his Department on behalf of our members over the coming weeks.

The GLAI had identified a number of core principles which it believes should form the basis for any new regulatory regime, chief among them are:

- Existing Irish gaming and betting legislation is outdated and should be replaced by a 21st Century Gambling Code.
- The regulation of the casino sector and the remote gambling sector – the two currently unregulated gambling activities – should happen as a matter of urgency and should be given priority. Depending on how long this process takes, interim licensing measures should be considered in the interests of consumer protection.
- Consumer protection, protection of the weak and vulnerable, keeping gambling crime free and corporate social responsibility in the provision of gambling services must be the corner stone of a new Gambling Code.
- Members of the Gaming and Leisure Association should, in recognition of their efforts to self regulate over the past five years, should be facilitated with a licensing system under any new gambling code so that they may have the legal certainty which they require to further invest in their businesses.
- The application of the Gambling Code should be overseen by an independent Regulator established specifically to regulate and control the gambling sector as a whole, with sufficient powers of enforcement to facilitate closure of non compliant operators.
- The regulation of remote gambling should not be approached from the narrow angle of tax revenue from some operators active in Ireland but rather from the angle that Ireland can compete with jurisdictions such as the Isle of Man or Malta and become the European Hub for remote gambling operators.

Further to the publication of the Governments own report on regulating gaming in July 2008 and the economic impact report published by DKM in November 2008, the GLAI is mindful of the benefits to the economy, both in terms of job creation and exchequer return, and urges that regulation of the industry be given priority.