



Michael Aird, MLC

Treasurer

Monday, 13 July 2009

Addressing Problem Gambling

The Treasurer, Michael Aird, today issued a Ministerial Direction to the Tasmanian Gaming Commission to implement a range of measures to further address problem gambling in Tasmania.

Mr Aird, who attended the Ministerial Council on Gambling meeting in Brisbane on Friday, said the measures would ensure Tasmania continued to have the best harm minimisation practices in Australia.

He said in developing the measures, in response to the findings of the recent Social and Economic Impact Study into Gambling, the State Government was mindful of the areas that need to be addressed nationally.

“At the Ministerial meeting, I voiced Tasmania’s strong support for a national response to the issue of player pre-commitment,” Mr Aird said.

“I have made no secret of my support of the principles behind smart cards and other player pre-commitment measures.

“We agreed that all jurisdictions would work together to develop a national policy standard to which all future pre-commitment systems would conform.

“This will enable consistency in pre-commitment technology to be used across Australia.”

Mr Aird said that work is now underway in Queensland and South Australia to trial pre-commitment technologies, with the Commonwealth agreeing to fund the evaluation of trials in South Australia.

“The outcome of both trials will further shape the development of the national policy standard,” he said.

Mr Aird said that Tasmania is already at the forefront of implementing harm minimisation strategies to reduce problem gambling.

“Much of the work program agreed to at last week’s Ministerial Council meeting has already been introduced, or is being introduced, in Tasmania.”

Mr Aird said that at last week’s meeting, Commonwealth, State and Territory officials also agreed on developing national actions around three key priority areas to reduce harm from gambling, including:

- Helping individuals set limits, including access to cash and pre-commitment technologies;

- Gaming machine standards for better consumer protection; and
- Responsible gambling environments.

The new measures to be implemented in Tasmania include:

- The maximum bet limit will be \$5 per spin for all gaming machines. Currently there is a \$10 limit in hotels and clubs and none in casinos. The maximum bet limit of \$5 per spin will apply across all venues.
- The cash input limit on note acceptors will be reduced from \$9 899 to \$500. Once a credit meter reaches or goes over the \$500 limit, any further notes will be rejected back to the player.
- Penalties will be increased and extended to all gaming staff who allow minors to enter a restricted gaming area.
- The maximum possible lines permitted to be played on gaming machines will be reduced from 50 to 30.
- Casinos will be required to limit EFTPOS transactions for gaming within their venues to one per person per day.
- All venues will be required to comply with a maximum limit of \$1 000 for cash payments of winnings from gaming machines and Keno.
- Cashing winning cheques on the same trading day at a gaming venue will be prohibited. As well, casinos will be required to ensure that cheques drawn on Australian banks are banked within five business days in order to minimise the use of un-presented cheques as a form of credit betting.
- The existing Responsible Conduct of Gaming course will be enhanced with a specific focus on problem gambler identification and appropriate intervention by venue staff.
- The current voluntary industry codes will be replaced by a new mandatory code to improve gaming environments. The content of the code will be developed following industry consultation. However, it will include provisions relating to advertising gambling products; player loyalty programs; and inducements that may lead to problem gambling behaviour.
- Attendant service of alcohol and food in public gaming areas between the hours of 9pm and the close of operations each day will be prohibited.
- The Tasmanian Gaming Commission will investigate the possible introduction of casino player information displays in hotels and clubs.
- Venues will be required to display 'Plain English' signage, including an explanation of 'return to player'.
- Venues will be required to comply with a minimum standard for lighting within gaming areas to ensure that all signage within that area can be clearly read.
- The Gaming Control Act 1993 will be amended to strengthen the gaming exclusions regime for self-excluded gamblers.

Mr Aird said that the effectiveness of the Helpline services will be reviewed and the Government will also undertake a specific educational campaign for 'at risk' target groups.

The Government has also commenced work on the development of a whole-of-government strategy to combat problem gambling.

"Most of the measures will be implemented by the Tasmanian Gaming Commission right away, while others cannot commence until after changes are made to the Gaming Control Act which will be considered by Parliament during the Spring session," Mr Aird said.

A full list of the new measures and updates on the Commission's progress in implementing them will be available at www.gaming.tas.gov.au and also included in the Liquor and Gaming Branch newsletter 'Liquor and Gaming Review'.

Further information: Tasmanian Government Communications Unit
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