

**Submission to the  
Social and Economic Impact Study of  
Gambling in Tasmania**

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*By*

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## Recommendations

- That the current legislated regime stipulating a SEIS is undertaken every three years be maintained, and further that the public consultation process for each study is widely and appropriately promoted throughout the Tasmanian community including, but not limited to, state government public notices published in each of the three major state newspapers.
- That a response be provided by the Tasmanian Gaming Commission in relation to this current and all future iterations of the SEIS, with such responses becoming the appropriate basis for effective policy development by the government of the day.
- That comprehensive modelling of the social and economic impact of the proposed Future Gaming Market policy is undertaken and publicly released as a matter of urgency, and prior any further steps to formalise the new model.
- That an independent study is undertaken on the impact of economic and public health crises on gambling behaviour and contributing factors for the purpose of informing and developing an appropriate best practice and evidence-based framework for future gaming venue access public policy responses in the event of any further similar crises which may result in the provision of economic relief, including but not limited to financial stimulus payments;
- Dedicated impact analysis of gaming impacts upon the community's financial and health well-being during the pandemic and post-pandemic recovery period needs to be undertaken.
- Develop a standardised prevalence study methodology to enable clear and direct comparison and contrast of key indicators between each successive Social and Economic Impact study, including an indication of the expected level of underestimation.
- Incorporate public policy benchmarks as a standardised feature consistent from one SEIS to the next, mapping whether successive SEIS' recommendations have been implemented partially, in full or not at all.
- Immediately introduce maximum \$1 bet limits on all poker machines within the state.
- Immediately slow poker machines spin speed setting to six seconds, as recommended by the Tasmanian Liquor and gaming Commission.
- Introduce lower maximum jackpots and higher return to player rates. Consideration and expert advice to be provided by the TLGC on an appropriate level for each of these features which would facilitate identified harm minimisation outcomes.
- Introduce and enforce ID checks to facilitate effective self-exclusion, and apply higher penalties for venue breaches of self-exclusion schemes. Support this measure by requiring single points of entry for gaming rooms.
- Mandate restriction of gaming room opening hours to be noon-midnight, or not more than 12 hours in each 24-hour period.
- Undertake a dedicated independent inquiry into the social and economic immediate and long-term impacts of gambling accessibility during COVID pandemic conditions.

- Transition to pokies-free communities - remove poker machines from hotels and clubs at the expiration of the current Deed is the most effective harm minimisation measure, and then located only in casino environments where greater consumer protection can then be put in place around them.

# Introduction

## Focus and scope of submission

The fifth Social and Economic Impact Study of Gambling in Tasmania (SEIS) occurs at a crucial and critical time in the state's gambling policy development.

In particular, since the last SEIS undertaken in 2017 (scheduled for release in December 2017, but released in January 2018), Tasmania has had a state election campaign in the lead up to which, and during, the issue of poker machines policy reform received almost unprecedented attention as an election issue.

Since the 2018 state election, the Tasmanian government has moved on implementing its Future Gaming Market policy which seeks to have a new regulatory model in place from the 1 July 2023. There are grave concerns that the intent of this policy is to entrench poker machines into the Tasmanian community landscape while modifying the regulatory environment, particularly the abolishment of the poker machine single licence arrangements. However, progress on this new regulatory model has been stalled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The pandemic has clearly had an impact on local gambling trends and habits, as well as the broader hospitality sector. Additional to the immediate and long-term challenges wrought upon the local economy, businesses and employment, the pandemic has also exacerbated conditions and vulnerabilities experienced by those with gambling problems and presented circumstances of increased risk of Tasmanians newly developing gambling problems.

It is crucial that a thorough and rigorous assessment is undertaken of the immediate and potential long-term impacts Covid-19 poses for Tasmanian gamblers, particularly those within the non-recreational categories. This assessment must be completed and any reforms and recommendations it generates be put in place before finalisation of the new regulatory regime as outlined in the Future Gaming Market policy.

The Tasmanian gambling industry consists of a range of gambling activities including casinos, keno, race and sports betting as well as minor activities including raffles and bingo. All these activities warrant ongoing scrutiny and regulation however detailed examination of these forms of gaming are beyond the scope of this submission.

In contrast, the ongoing impact of electronic gaming machines (EGMs) otherwise referred to as poker machines and pokies, continue to be the main area of ongoing community concern, impact and controversy across Tasmania, and as such forms the main focus of this submission.

## Role of the SEIS

An independent review of the social and economic impact of gambling across Tasmania is required every three years, under the *Gaming Control Act 1993*. This initiative was recommended in 2002, with the first SEIS delivered in 2008.

Although it covers all forms of gambling currently operating in the state, the historic catalyst for this legislated requirement for an independent review process were community concerns over the negative impact of poker machines upon Tasmanians' social and economic health. Importantly the SEIS process provides an important feedback loop between the community, industry stakeholders and policy makers in government.

Obviously, the findings and recommendations of the SEIS are not prescriptive but are dependent upon the government of the day for implementation and action. As such, each study risks being yet another report placed on a dusty shelf and forgotten, particularly should findings and recommendations challenge the priorities of the government of the day.

Standardised prevalence study components and implementation benchmarks would assist in providing a clearer evaluation mechanism for the community and other stakeholders from one study to the next.

In response to the 2008 SEIS, the then state Treasurer directed that the Tasmanian Gaming Commission prepare a *Policy Response Paper* (<https://www.treasury.tas.gov.au/Documents/TGC-SEIS-Report.pdf>) to:

*“...review the findings of the (SEIS) report and provide the Government with advice on an appropriate policy response to best address the issue of problem gambling, those at risk of developing a gambling problem, and consumer protection in Tasmania.”*

In this paper, released in October 2008, the Tasmanian Gaming Commission presented ten key findings, and summarised its view as follows:

*“The TGC acknowledges that the evidence base available is incomplete and not based particularly in Tasmanian circumstances. However the TGC is firmly of the opinion that there is enough evidence available to strongly suggest that:*

- problem gambling is a significant issue here in Tasmania;*
- the number of problem gamblers is underestimated;*
- EGMs are the most dangerous mode of gaming especially for those individuals most likely to become problem gamblers;*
- such gamblers contribute disproportionately to EGM turnover and losses;*
- there are a range of policy options available to Government that would result in interventions that would reduce the losses of problem gamblers;*
- recreational gamblers may well be more tolerant of additional interventions than has been implied by some parties – particularly if they are aware of the reasons behind them; and*
- a secondary result of such interventions would be a decline in the profitability of the gaming industry and gambling tax revenue to Government.”*

The paper reviewed the harm minimisation and consumer protection measures in place in Tasmania at that time and assessed those which had the potential to be enhanced. Further, the opportunity to enhance each of these identified measures was assessed against a range of considerations including: impact on recreational gamblers, impact on industry, cost, timeframe, and action.

While there is little indication that this 2008 Policy Response paper had significant influence on the policy of the government of the day relating to gambling or poker machines, it remains a valuable piece of independent, local, expert advice. It would be appropriate for such a response to be provided by the Tasmanian Gaming Commission in relation to this current and all future iterations of the SEIS, and for such responses to become the appropriate basis for effective policy development by the government of the day.

### Community awareness of the SEIS role

Given the significance of the tri-yearly SEIS in providing a community feedback loop, a relatively current status report of key gaming indicators, as well as an independent assessment of Tasmania’s gaming and gaming regulatory status to help inform the development of public policy in this area, it was alarming to see a suggestion made to the 2017 Parliamentary Committee Inquiry on Future Gaming Markets to extend the period between successive SEIS processes on the spurious grounds of a lack of community interest and/or involvement.

Despite flagging this consideration, the Parliamentary Inquiry Final Report (2017) did also state evidence supports the continuation of the SEIS, and specifically recommended that, *“the next review should be conducted in a timely fashion to inform policy making in 2023”* (pg 14.)

Given this recommendation and acknowledgement of the important role this SEIS process should have in informing public policy decisions currently in pandemic-induced abeyance as well as the 2023 deadline, the lack of public promotion of this study’s public consultation period is concerning.

It is worth placing on the public record that contrary to standard practice when promoting a state government public consultation process, the Saturday Public Notices advertisement was only placed in one

of the three state newspapers, *the Mercury* which is the predominate outlet in the state's south. Normally, standard procedure would be for the same Public Notice to also appear in the north-west's *Saturday Advocate* newspaper, and the north-eastern *Saturday Examiner* newspaper. Despite journalists asking why the two northern outlets were omitted from the government's promotional material, to date an explanation is yet to be forthcoming (*Examiner*, 7 Sept 2020).

Nor did the state government issue a media release or make any public statement drawing attention to the fifth SEIS and the public consultation process and timeframe. In contrast, government media releases have been issued to promote the respective public consultation processes for draft legislation, grants schemes, state government strategies and recently feedback invited on the new Bridgewater Bridge.

Given approximately 150 submissions were received by the 2017 Parliamentary Committee Inquiry into Future Gaming Markets, and over 50 organisations were represented during the public hearings (2017 Final Report: pg 4), there is clearly an ongoing community and stakeholder interest in the state's gaming regime, especially where it relates to pokies.

It may be, that had the public consultation period for the SEIS received the standard promotion by state authorities, an increased number of submissions may have been made, and also from a broader cross-section of the community. Hopefully this year's failure to advertise in all three major state newspapers will not be repeated for future studies, but it is important to take this opportunity now to reiterate the SEIS can only fulfil its purpose to provide a feedback loop between those directly affected by gaming, particularly pokies, and those working to establish an accurate and meaningful status assessment, should the community be made aware of the public consultation process in a timely manner.

I urge a return to the standardised practice of the state government placing a public notice advising of the commencement of each SEIS in all three of the state's major newspaper outlets, as a bare minimum.

To reiterate, this submission to the fifth SEIS will not attempt to address all matters relating to, nor all modes of, gambling within the state. Instead it will focus on key areas reflecting primary areas of community concern, and where public policy is the most contested and contentious.

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to this important gambling social and economic impact study,

**Meg Webb MLC**

**Independent Member for Nelson**

### ***Recommendations***

- That the current legislated regime stipulating a SEIS is undertaken every three years be maintained, and further that the public consultation process for each study is widely and appropriately promoted throughout the Tasmanian community including, but not limited to, state government public notices published in each of the three major state newspapers.
- That a response be provided by the Tasmanian Gaming Commission in relation to this current and all future iterations of the SEIS, with such responses becoming the appropriate basis for effective policy development by the government of the day.

## Overview of Developments since 2017 SEIS

The fourth SEIS was undertaken in 2017 and scheduled for public release in December of that year.

However, it was not released until the 17<sup>th</sup> of January 2018. In the interim the-then Hodgman Liberal state government announced its new *Future Gaming Markets* policy on the 9<sup>th</sup> of January. There is no obvious indication that the fourth SEIS's findings or recommendations influenced the government's new policy.

On the 28<sup>th</sup> of January, then-Premier Will Hodgman called an election for the 3<sup>rd</sup> of March 2018. Unsurprisingly public attention was then diverted to the election campaign and the different political parties' respective gaming and pokies policy platforms, including the incumbent government's newly released *Future Gaming Markets* policy.

Unfortunately, public scrutiny and consideration of the fourth SEIS fell between the gaps of these events.

### Parliamentary Committee Inquiry 2017

As stated above, a Joint House Parliamentary Committee Inquiry on Future Gaming Markets was established in August 2016, with its final report tabled in Parliament on the 17<sup>th</sup> of October 2017.

The impetus for this Parliamentary Inquiry was the examination of the 2016 'Hodgman Liberal Government post-2023 Gaming Structural Framework', with the inquiry's terms of reference including structural reform of the industry post-2023 (expiry date of the current Deed between the Crown and Federal Group detailing the latter's single licence arrangement for poker machines), and an assessment of options for the development of potential market-based mechanisms, including tender, for the operation of pokies in pubs and clubs.

The Inquiry's final terms of reference included, amongst other considerations, community attitudes and aspiration relating to the Tasmanian gambling industry with a particular focus on the location, number and type of poker machines in the state; and a review of harm minimisation measures. It also included a specific reference point regarding a review of the Tasmanian Social and Economic Impact Studies findings.

Racing was considered outside the Committee's scope, while online gaming was only considered in a limited context.

Significantly the Final Report of the Parliamentary Committee Inquiry states that of the 148 submissions received the majority raised community objections to EGMs (pokies) located in hotels and clubs across local communities. Those submitting such concerns were individuals as well as organisations including Local Councils such as Hobart City Council, Brighton and Glenorchy, Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania, TasCOSS, Anglicare, Relationships Australia, Mission Australia and others.

Other recurrent themes in the majority of submissions include concern that the post-2023 Gaming Structural Framework's focus on developing alternative pokies licencing mechanisms to operate pokies outside the casinos will do little to improve or ameliorate the impact pokies have upon the community, and the need for further evidence-based harm minimisation measures.

While there is little point in summarising the entire, and publicly available, inquiry report here, for the purposes of this submission there are two critical points for consideration:

- 1) That despite the initial government impetus behind the Joint Parliamentary Committee Inquiry being the 2016 'Hodgman Liberal Government post-2023 Gaming Structural Framework', and hence most of the public submissions and committee deliberations focused upon this Framework, the government subsequently abandoned this policy and instead adopted the

current Future Gaming Markets model barely three months before the 2018 state election was called.

This subsequent model is almost identical to the proposal by Federal Group and the Tasmanian Hospitality Association (THA) submitted as a supplementary submission late in the Parliamentary Committee Inquiry process on the final day of hearings (18 August 2017). The Committee's Final Report states: *"The Committee has had insufficient time to complete a thorough investigation and consultation on the Federal/THA proposal"* (2017: pg 19).

Thus it is important to recognise that the government's current Future Gaming Markets model has not been subjected to thorough deliberations and scrutiny of the Joint Parliamentary Inquiry, despite its last-minute 'unveiling' at the end of that process; and

- 2) It is useful to note the majority of the 148 submissions focused upon ongoing concerns over the negative social and economic impacts of pokies in Tasmania's hotels and clubs; and the inadequacy of current harm minimisation measures.

### State election 2018

As mentioned previously, gaming policy, particularly that pertaining to poker machines in the community, dominated the public campaign space in the lead up to the formal state election campaign and throughout the campaign.

Two months after the tabling of the Joint Parliamentary Committee inquiry discussed above, the Tasmanian Labor Party announced in December 2017 its new gambling policy to remove pokies from pubs and clubs by 2023, marking for the first time an end to the previous bipartisan approach to pokies shared with the Liberal party. This meant that with the Tasmanian Greens' long-established policy to roll back pokies from pubs and clubs, two of the three main parties with parliamentary representation supported the removal of pokies from the community.

In response, a 'Love your Local' campaign undertook an extensive blanketing advertising campaign in support of retaining the status quo. Federal Group, the current monopoly licence holder of Tasmanian poker machines, later admitted to supporting this pro-pokies campaign, along with industry group the Tasmanian Hospitality Association.

In January 2018 the Liberal government both released its out-of-the-blue adoption of the Federal/THA gaming policy, currently known as the Future Gaming Market policy, then 19 days later called the state election.

Long after the election campaign, and the return of the Liberal government, the annual Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) electoral donation disclosures revealed that the gambling industry donated over \$400,000 to the Liberal party prior the election. In the absence of a state based political donation disclosure scheme, Tasmanians rely solely on the AEC annual returns to provide any transparency on such donation practices.

Electoral and political donation reform is beyond the scope of the SEIS, however it is worth noting that the current deficient state disclosure regime forms part of the policy environment impacting upon the public debate and public policy formation in Tasmania.

### Status of Proposed Future Gaming Market policy

The implementation of the state government's *The Future of Gaming in Tasmania* (Future Gaming Markets) policy is currently stalled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In February 2020 a consultation paper was released with the period for feedback on the implementation framework of the proposed new regulatory model closing on the 18<sup>th</sup> of March this year.

Normally, submissions received would be made public by the department posting them online. However, on the 28<sup>th</sup> of March the government announced that implementation of the gaming industry reforms will be deferred in the wake of the pandemic, and that public release of submissions received may also be delayed. At the time of writing, no further update has been provided, and the submissions remain out of the public domain.

Even prior the pandemic disruption, the government's proposed new policy has received scarce scrutiny.

This SEIS process presents the first opportunity for a rigorous and independent assessment of the proposed new regulatory model and its implications. As discussed above, the Federal Group/THA submission to the 2017 Parliamentary Committee inquiry, which appears to be the blueprint for the government's new policy, was presented too late for that forum to analyse it adequately.

Further, it is arguable the February 2020 Consultation paper sought to narrow the nature of 'relevant' feedback by stipulating that only feedback on the application of the policy would be considered, not an examination of the policy or model per se.

### Flaws with the proposed *Future Gaming Market* policy

To date, there has not been any explanation provided for the government's previous commitment for post-2023 rights to operate pokies in pubs and clubs to be "allocated and priced by a market-based mechanism, such as a tender".

Instead of a market-based price for licences, the government's policy is now to provide free licences to venues currently already hosting poker machines, contrary to advice from both Treasury and the Tasmanian Liquor and Gaming Commission (TLGC). Federal Group would retain control of pokies in casinos and the 12 hotels owned by that company.

In a letter to the 2017 Parliamentary Committee, the TLGC Chair critiqued the Federal/THA industry proposal, as it was then, raising concerns that it did not reflect the promised competitive market-based process. Crucially the TLGC identifies that a competitive process would not only provide all potential industry operators a chance to enter the market, but that significantly, it would also facilitate the testing of the market for the introduction of best-practice harm minimisation measures such as mandatory pre-commitment. In contrast, "the proposed model does not provide any enhanced harm minimisation initiatives that would protect vulnerable people EGM use" (2017 Final Report, Appendix D).

In October last year, I tabled the following question in the Tasmanian Legislative Council:

In the Premier's evidence to the Joint Select Committee into Future Gaming Markets and as set out in the Hodgman Liberal Government's Post-2023 Gaming Structural Framework, it states that 'The right to operate poker machines post 2023 will be allocated and priced by a market-based mechanism, such as a tender', and also that 'Hotels and clubs that had machines in place in March 2016 will not require any form of retrospective approvals.'

QUESTION (1) How will a market-based mechanism apply to hotels and clubs that currently have poker machines?

QUESTION (2) Will all hotels and clubs pay a licence fee for their right to operate poker machines?

QUESTION (3) (a) How many individual licenses will potentially be allocated to hotels and clubs under this proposed model?

QUESTION (3)(b) Will a licence be required for each individual location or will companies who own multiple venues apply for one licence to operate across those multiple locations?

QUESTION (4) What is the estimated market value of each of these individual licences and what is their combined market value?

QUESTION (5) What economic modelling has been done or commissioned by the Government on the overall impact on the Tasmanian economy of the proposed new licensing arrangements?

In the joint Tasmanian Hospitality Association/Federal Group submission to the Joint Select Committee into Future Gaming Markets, the industry stated that its modelling estimated that each poker machine venue would be worth, on average, over \$1.5 million more under direct licensing (assuming a total state tax take of 38 per cent).

QUESTION (6) Given the tax take stated in the THA/Federal Group submission to the Joint Select Committee into Future Gaming Markets is almost exactly the same as that set out in the Liberal Party's election policy under the direct licensing plan, can the Treasurer confirm whether the industry estimated figure of an increase in value of \$1.5 million for each poker machine venue accords with Treasury modelling?

To which the government responded:

**ANSWERS (1) to (3)** The Government's Future of Gaming in Tasmania – FGM – policy, released in February 2018, replaced the Post-2023 Gaming Structural Framework and was informed by the outcomes of the Joint Select Committee on Future Gaming Markets. *[Note: the Committee's Final Report specifically stipulates it was unable to thoroughly analyse the Federal/THA proposal – my comment]*

The FGM policy establishes, amongst other things, the structural framework for electronic gaming machine – EGM – operation in hotels and clubs from 1 July 2023. This includes licensing the right to operate EGMs in hotels and clubs on an individual venue operator model and going to market for the licence to monitor the network of EGMs in hotels and clubs. There are currently 93 licensed hotels and clubs with EGMs.

The Government has established a dedicated Future Gaming Market project team to manage the significant and complex restructure of the gaming industry, which will require legislative amendments to implement. The details of the new regulatory model are under development and will be reflected in legislation to amend the Gaming Control Act 1993.

Due to the complexity of the legislative amendments required to implement the FGM policy, and the need to appropriately consult on these amendments, the Government does not intend to introduce legislation any earlier than March 2020.

**ANSWERS (4) to (6)** The Future Gaming Market project team is continuing to undertake the significant and complex work associated with implementing the Government's FGM policy, including the development of licence fees, tax rates and licence terms. Government has not yet settled on the licence fees, tax rates or licence term that will apply to hotels and clubs under the FGM policy and **therefore no modelling is currently available** *[emphasis mine]*.

The proposed Future Gaming Markets is clearly rushed, ill-conceived, is contrary to Treasury and TLGC advice, and places vested industry interests above the interests and well-being of Tasmanians.

The legislating of this flawed industry-driven model risks locking in further decades of pokies-induced harm upon Tasmanians, their families and local businesses.

#### **Recommendation**

- That comprehensive modelling of the social and economic impact of the proposed Future Gaming Market policy is undertaken and publicly released as a matter of urgency, and prior any further steps to formalise the new model.

## **Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic**

The March 2020 lockdowns in response to the COVID-19 pandemic provided a reprieve to poker machine vulnerable Tasmanians, their families and also those local businesses providing essential services such as groceries.

The state government closed all gaming venues on 23 March this year, reopening gaming venues on 26 June despite calls to keep them closed.

#### **Snapshot of COVID-19 and Pokies in Tasmania**

- The 13-week gaming venues shutdown period saw Tasmanians save an estimated **\$44,327,012** from the pokies.\*
- At a time when many were at their most vulnerable, this saving of **\$470,147** a day available for groceries, essentials, and supporting local businesses.
- After reopening, Tasmanians lost **\$2, 629, 313** on pokies over the 5 day period from the 26<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> of June.
- Over the 97 day period from 26 June to 30 September, (*necessary stimulus packages including JobKeeper and JobSeeker active during most of this period*) statewide pokies losses totalled **\$55,002,434**, equating *an average of \$567,035 lost on pokies per day*.
- The state's southern region (combined southern municipalities data but excluding casino losses) pokies losses for the 97 day period since the reopening of venues from June to September was a total of **\$11,873,476** – *an average of \$122,406 lost per day*.
- The north-east region (excluding casino losses) pokies losses for the 97 day period since the reopening of venues from June to September was a total of **\$6,683,481** – *an average of \$68,901 lost per day*.
- The north-west region pokies losses for the 97 day period since the reopening of venues from June to September was a total of **\$9,558,289** – *an average of \$98,539 lost per day*.

\*Figure derived from total Tasmanian losses for 2018/19 (\$17,603,745) giving a daily average of \$470,147, applied to the shutdown period.

The 2008-09 Global Financial Crisis (GFC) experience informed us that in times of stress, the stimulus payments desperately needed by both the vulnerable citizens and local economies, were susceptible to being consumed by 'discretionary' activities such as pokies.

Initially, the pandemic gaming rooms shutdown provided a strong contrast to the 2008-09 Global Financial Crisis (GFC) experience, where the GFC-related data shows strong correlation between GFC stimulus payments and significant spikes in pokies losses nationally, including in Tasmania.

The 2008-09 GFC-related pokies losses made very little economic contribution compared to alternative spending options, meaning pokies undermined the state's GFC economic recovery.

Based on the GFC experience and emerging disturbing interstate trends, urgent calls were made for Tasmania's gaming venues to remain closed to ensure badly-needed pandemic stimulus payments and early superannuation withdrawals were not diverted into pokies to the detriment of individuals, families and local businesses.

As reiterated by the 2017 Parliamentary Committee Final Report:

*Evidence has found the impact of gambling is significant and certain communities in Tasmania appear to have been disproportionately affected by gambling addiction and access to numerous EGM's within local venues... The density of EGM's in certain communities and their impact has been notable in the evidence (pg 10); and*

*There is a higher density of EGMs in certain municipalities across Tasmania. The municipalities with higher densities tend to be in lower social-economic areas of the State. (pg 13).*

Nationally and internationally, we were made increasingly aware of the extraordinary stresses experienced by individuals, families and communities during the roller-coaster that is the coronavirus pandemic. Further, these stresses risked exacerbating dangerous behaviours and vulnerabilities such as addictions including gambling. A recent Sydney University study found participants reporting that when feeling levels of higher distress, they were more likely to spend more money on gambling, although not more time on gambling (Gainsbury & Blaszczynski 2020).

We know pokies are the most dangerous and addictive form of gambling currently available. We know pokies locations are intensified in vulnerable communities. We also know from the GFC experience that the combination of additional stresses and uncertainties exacerbating existing vulnerabilities with much needed stimulus payments, contribute to a potentially dangerous and destructive mix.

Yet despite the recent GFC example, it was confirmed in a response to a question I tabled in the Parliament, that the state government had **not** undertaken any impact analysis to assess the risk of resuming access to poker machines may have on eroding the effectiveness of both Federal and State government economic stimulus efforts (including, but not limited to, increased Job Seeker payments, Job Keeper payments, and early accessed personal superannuation lump sums) designed to ensure household essential requirements are met while also supporting local economies.

Worryingly, the government's response to questioning indicates a failure to comprehend that the unique economic and social risks posed by the resumption of pokies venues operations during the pandemic is not comparable or limited to hygiene-based public health considerations for food, beverage and event aspects of the broader hospitality industry. Therefore, there was a failure to undertake any analysis to provide any meaningful rationale for the resumption of pokies venue operations. Nor were studies undertaken to identify any potential increased gambling risks during the pandemic crisis.

Of further concern is the government’s failure to increase the frequency of media and online advertising promoting the public health messaging on gambling, and promoting gambling support services as part of the COVID-19 response.

A recent *Gambling in Australia during COVID-19* report undertaken by the Australian Gambling Research Centre and which surveyed over 2,000 people who gamble across the nation during June-July this year, found as one of its key findings: “Key experts noted that the temporary closure of pokies venues had had immediate benefits for some people who gamble, including more money for essential items and increased savings” (pg 1).

The report also noted, “survey participants and key experts recommended a range of initiatives to minimise gambling-related harm in the community, including a reduction in the availability and marketing of gambling products and the implementation of strong consumer protection measures” (pg 1).

Further, this report found that prior to the COVID-19 restrictions 35% of those surveyed gambled on pokies compared to 14% during restrictions, clearly indicating the difference accessibility to land-based gaming venues makes.

Personal anecdotes provided by survey participants include the following:

*Being in Melbourne [Vic.] we have not had access to a [pokies] venue since March so my savings account has never seen so much money. I have found myself having little online \$5, \$10 bets with for AFL & NRL more than I did before COVID. (Consumer, Female, 38)*

*Since TABs have been closed during COVID-19 my gambling has stopped and I have managed to get some sanity and order in my life. (Consumer, Male, 55) (pg 4).*

The Tasmanian pre and post-COVID-19 lockdown pokies losses figures speak for themselves:

#### Pokies Losses: Comparison pre & post COVID-19 Lockdown

*(Tasmanian gaming venues closed due to the pandemic lockdown from 23 March 2020 – 26 June 2020)*

	2019-2020	2020-21	Monthly Percentage difference 2019-20
July	\$15,412,281	\$19,428,375	26.06% increase
Aug	\$15,476,406	\$18,554,436	19.88% increase
Sept	\$13,809,883	\$17,019,623	23.24% increase
Oct	\$15,119,558		
Nov	\$14,938,339		
Dec	\$14,936,661		
Jan	\$14,704,029		
Feb	\$14,166,956		
Mar	\$9,092,827		
Apr	\$0*		
May	\$0*		
June	\$2,629,313		
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$130,286,253</b>		

\*Note: gaming venues closed 23 March, reopened 26 June 2020 due to COVID-19 pandemic  
Source: Liquor and Gaming: Gambling Industry Data <https://www.treasury.tas.gov.au/liquor-and-gaming/legislation-and-data/gambling-industry-data/electronic-gaming-machine-expenditure-by-financial-year>

The Tasmanian experience appears to be corroborated by that of interstate. In relation to pokies during COVID-19, the Australian Gambling Research Centre report found:

“Most key experts discussed the temporary closure of pokies venues and casinos and the ‘forced break’ from gambling that many people experienced as being beneficial for their clients. While a number of key experts noted that they had not (to date) observed large shifts from land-based gambling (e.g. on pokies or TABs) to online modes, there was a concern that consumers at greater risk of gambling-related harm might shift to online gambling where larger sums of money could be lost very quickly, or that people might move to offshore (and unregulated) gambling websites to gamble on pokies or other ‘casino type’ games” (2020 pg7); and

“The potential harm and impacts for people who gamble at land-based (pokies) venues were also discussed. Some key experts from clinical and counselling organisations reported that many of their clients had experienced an immediate decrease in harm with the closure of venues. The physical inability to gamble at venues had reportedly resulted in significant benefits, including more money for essential items, increased financial savings, connecting with other interests and, for some clients, a desire to stop using pokies altogether.

There was, however, a concern among a number of key experts that the reopening of pokies and casino venues would lead to increased harm, especially among people with more risky gambling behaviours. Their concern related to some people ‘binge’ gambling on pokies, losing any financial savings they had accumulated, and returning to harmful gambling patterns.

*People have stopped gambling but they are very eagerly awaiting the pokies venues to reopen ... in my opinion there will be a big influx [of people] with a lot of money put into pokies ... I wish [the venues] would stay shut ... (Key expert)*

Key experts reported that gambling revenue from pokies had already increased significantly (compared to the same time last year) in the states and territories where venues had reopened after the restrictions. They noted that because of social distancing and limits on patron numbers in venues, it was likely to be people who were more at-risk of gambling-related harm who were gambling, and with larger amounts of money.

*That gambling spend [once venues reopened] ... actually represents about a 50% increase, because there were about 50% less machines in venues because of social distancing ... so we’ve seen a smaller number of people gambling more money. (Key expert)” (2020 pg 9).*

While the lines between these dots of vulnerable and stressed communities, access to pokies and stimulus payment may not have been apparent as soon as they should have been during the 2008-09 GFC, there is no excuse for not learning those GFC lessons instead of repeating them during the COVID-19 health and economic crisis.

In this context it is arguable that the reopening of gaming venues, despite specific reminders of the GFC experience, while stimulus payments and early access to superannuation were still underway was a callous, negligent and irresponsible decision for the government to make.

### COVID-19 Impacts on Online Gambling

In May, while land-based pokies venues were still closed to the public, I asked in Parliament about any mechanisms the state government may have put in place to measure the level of use and quantum of losses to online gambling, particularly during the COVID-19 crisis.

While stating that it is difficult to obtain Tasmanian data on the level of online gambling, the government did acknowledge that financial institutions had reported that consumer spending on gambling has increased during the period of COVID-19 restrictions.

Interstate work is underway examining the pandemic and the lockdowns impacts upon the rates and ramifications of online gambling, sports and other gambling formats not reliant on land-based geographic accessibility such as pokies venues. Despite acknowledging this is of equal and urgent importance, especially with growing awareness of emerging trends of gambling risk behaviours of young men, it is beyond the scope of this submissions to contribute in detail on those important matters.

#### **Recommendations**

- That an independent study is undertaken on the impact of economic and public health crises on gambling behaviour and contributing factors for the purpose of informing and developing an appropriate best practice and evidence-based framework for future gaming venue access public policy responses in the event of any further similar crises which may result in the provision of economic relief, including but not limited to financial stimulus payments;
- Dedicated impact analysis of gaming impacts upon the community's financial and health well-being during the pandemic and post-pandemic recovery period needs to be undertaken.

## **Ongoing Impact of Poker Machines in the Community**

National and international literature has found consistently that pokies are associated with a range of health and social harms including poor mental and physical health, poor quality social relationships, stressed workplace relationships, and participation in illegal and/or criminal activities.

Pokies also experience a higher association with gambling addiction. This correlation is not an accident. The available literature also, *“describes the insidious combination of technology and behavioural science employed by the gambling industry to generate harmful addiction among users”* (Espiner & Houia-Ashwell 2020).

International studies have also identified in their respective jurisdictions the trend that sees pokies more densely concentrated in low socioeconomic areas, and the gradient of harm associated with pokies aligns socioeconomic status with lower socioeconomic areas or status, which also is clearly correlated with increased vulnerability and harm.

Pokies *“... are widespread throughout Australia and account for 65 % of overall gambling expenditure. However, they have also been associated with 75–80 % of gambling-related problems”* (Lye & Hirschberg 2014; pg 725).

Australia (with the exception of Western Australia), has:

- a disproportionately high number of pokies per capita;
- a typical style of poker machine that is regarded as 'high intensity'; and
- a comparatively high level of harm due to the use of pokies.

Data available on poker machine use, including previous SEIS findings, indicates:

- Pokies are the most harmful form of gambling in Tasmania
- Approximately **27 000** Tasmanians are in at-risk groups (low, moderate and problem gambling)
- **1 in 3** Tasmanians personally know someone with a serious problem with gambling on pokies
- **40 to 60 per cent** of the money taken by pokies comes from people addicted to the machines or are classified as at-risk
- **79 per cent** of Tasmanian Gamblers Help clients have pokies as their primary form of gambling
- **1 in 6** people who use pokies regularly will become addicted
- Municipalities with higher densities of pokies tend to be in lower social-economic areas of the State

- The majority of Tasmanians' money spent on gaming is lost on pokies. with just 10% spent on other more benign forms such as Lotto and minor gaming.
- Economic evidence reveals pokies gambling employs only 3 people for every million dollars spent, compared, for example to 20 people for food service within the hospitality industry.

As the 2017 Parliamentary Inquiry found:

*“There are people in the Tasmanian community who have been negatively impacted by gambling through addiction and economic hardship. Other people have also been affected indirectly as a consequence of gambling machines and associated hardships being experienced by family or friends.*

*The percentage of gamblers that experience problems in Tasmania is below nationally reported figures, however, the proportion of revenue that problem gamblers contribute in Tasmania is disproportionately high and growing.*

*Evidence has found the impact of gambling is significant and certain communities in Tasmania appear to have been disproportionately affected by gambling addiction and access to numerous EGM's within local venues.*

*In addition, as the Government has noted, there are many people in Tasmania that question the way the current and previous arrangements for gaming operations in the State were negotiated. In particular, the perception the negotiations were not transparent nor open to competition has been raised within the inquiry.*

*The issues of addiction and harm minimisation have been prominent in the evidence the Committee has received and have been carefully considered with respect and dignity to those affected by gambling.*

*Most notable amongst the issues associated with problem gambling has been the future of EGM's in the community. The density of EGM's in certain communities and their impact has been notable in the evidence.” (Final Report 2017: pg 10).*

Anecdotally, we hear continual stories of individuals detailing either their own pokies experiences or those of their families, co-workers and/or friends.

Pokies losses take money away from other local businesses, deliver comparatively few jobs, and at least half comes from people with a pokies addiction.

Practical and effective measures are available which would cut harm without affecting recreational players, and which can be implemented in a timely manner.

## Harm Minimisation Measures

Poker machine design and programming can be modified to decrease the likelihood of addiction, while such modifications having little impact on recreational pokies players.

Pokies typically in use in Australia are high intensity, and are designed and programmed to include features that increase the likelihood of addiction, with evidence suggesting that normal use of Australian poker machines is likely to cause addiction in one in six users.

These features relate to:

- spin speed;
- bet limits;
- maximum jackpot;
- near misses;
- losses disguised as wins; and
- return to player.

## Reforms Needed

### Introduce \$1 Bet Limits & Slower spin speed

- 2016 data reveals Tasmania's maximum bet limit exceeds that in Quebec, Finland, Iceland, Ireland, New Zealand and the United Kingdom. For example, whereas the UK has a \$2 bet limit in Tasmania it is \$5.
- The Tasmanian Liquor and Gaming Commission has recommended over many years that Tasmanian spin speed settings should be slowed to six seconds, and the maximum bet limit should be reduced to \$1.
- This would result in a ten-fold reduction of the maximum theoretical loss from \$600 an hour to \$60 an hour.
- The 2014 SEIS found the mean spend by people with a gambling problem is \$4 per spin, meaning a \$1 bet limit would reduce their mean spend by \$3 per spin a three quarters reduction in harm!
- A recent academic study found, *"... a reduction in maximum bet size to \$1 demonstrated evidence for a potential reduction in harm associated with gambling, because those gambling on \$1 maximum machines played for less time, made fewer bets, lost less money, and consumed less alcohol and cigarettes during play"* (Harris & Griffiths 2018: pg 402).

As part of the 2017 Parliamentary Committee process, the Tasmanian Department of Treasury and Finance was asked to model scenarios implementing a \$1 Bet limit. However, for some reason, the final report does not discuss this information provided. **NB: I have attached this modelling to this submission for consideration by this SEIS process.**

### Lower maximum jackpots and higher return to player rates

- Jackpots affect the intensity of the machine and they affect the losses and the addictive nature of the machine. Tasmania's maximum jackpot is set at \$25 000; for comparison, the UK's is only \$200. Consideration and expert advice from the TLGC on an appropriate level which would facilitate identified harm minimisation outcomes is required.
- Return to player rates are another feature that contributes to the volatility of the poker machines, their addictive quality and the level of harm they can cause. Changes to the return to player rate can be mandated via regulation, and only require machines to be set and programmed accordingly. Consideration and expert advice from the TLGC on an appropriate return to player rate which would facilitate identified harm minimisation outcomes is required.

### Time-outs on machines

- Continuous play on a poker machine contributes to the risk of developing an addiction and to the level of harm caused to someone with an addiction to pokies. Programmed shutoffs after fixed periods to interrupt continuous play are a straightforward way to reduce the likelihood of harm. Similarly, pop up

messages at regular intervals or a machine shut down after a large win, would provide people with time to rethink gambling before returning to play.

Consideration and expert advice from the TLGC on appropriate requirement for programmed time-outs/shutdowns of poker machines which would facilitate identified harm minimisation outcomes is required.

All these features are programmable, enabling each country or state to decide what rules and regulations it will set to determine intensity of the machines in their jurisdiction.

### **Other regulatory evidence-based harm minimisation measures needed**

- Mandatory ID checks to use gaming areas in order to meaningfully implement self-exclusion schemes, along with the enforcement of higher penalties for venue breaches of self-exclusion. This may be best supported by single points of entry to gaming areas, rather than side or back doors that allow people to enter and exit without necessarily being seen by staff.
- Mandated shorter opening hours for gaming areas. Currently, gaming areas can be used for up to 20 hours per day, with only a four-hour continuous period of closure required. It is highly likely that those using gaming areas after midnight and before noon are people who currently have or are at risk of developing an addiction to poker machines. Restricting opening hours to be noon-midnight, or not more than 12 hours in each 24-hour period would be of little detriment to recreational players but provide a meaningful constraint on the harmful use of poker machines.

### Longer-term Actions Required:

- Undertake a dedicated independent inquiry into the social and economic immediate and long-term impacts of gambling accessibility during COVID pandemic conditions.
- Transition to pokies-free communities – removal of poker machines from hotels and clubs at the expiration of the current Deed is the most effective harm minimisation measure available for consideration. Once located only in casino environments, greater consumer protection could then be put in place around poker machines, as per the reforms discussed above.

These reforms are supported by the recent Australian Gambling Research Centre report, where many participants indicated they wanted to see changes to the availability and provision of land-based gambling in Australia. This mostly related to restrictions on pokies venues and casinos;

*“Reduce access to gambling, particularly EGMs [electronic gambling machines/pokies]. Reduce machine numbers and betting limits to prevent harm. Rip down ‘VIP room’ signage, including flashing signs on exteriors of clubs and hotels. (Consumer, Male, 29)*

*Pubs & clubs should have their gaming room hours reduced. It is too easy for people to stay for 10 hours at a time. (Consumer, Female, 54)*

*Less gambling rooms, lower [spend] limits and slower spins. Mandatory pre-commitment per entry. (Consumer, Male, 29)*

*Removal of pokies from all venues except casinos. (Consumer, Female, 48)*

The other change that participants most frequently raised related to broader consumer protection measures and harm reduction messaging.

*A national self-exclusion register. Firmer restrictions on gambling advertising (possibly completely removing it) and more restrictions on gambling providers to pick up problem gamblers before they completely ruin their lives. (Consumer, Male, 25)*

*Limiting or closing of pokie machines/venues. Greater oversight for online betting. Mandatory restrictions for online bookmakers. Further support provided for problem gamblers. (Consumer, Male, 30)" (2020 pg 13)*

### **Recommendations**

- Immediately introduce maximum \$1 bet limits on all poker machines within the state.
- Immediately slow poker machines spin speed setting to six seconds, as recommended by the Tasmanian Liquor and gaming Commission.
- Introduce lower maximum jackpots and higher return to player rates. Consideration and expert advice to be provided by the TLGC on an appropriate level for each of these features which would facilitate identified harm minimisation outcomes.
- Introduce and enforce ID checks to facilitate effective self-exclusion, and apply higher penalties for venue breaches of self-exclusion schemes. Support this measure by requiring single points of entry for gaming rooms.
- Mandate restriction of gaming room opening hours to be noon-midnight, or not more than 12 hours in each 24-hour period.
- Undertake a dedicated independent inquiry into the social and economic immediate and long-term impacts of gambling accessibility during COVID pandemic conditions.
- Transition to pokies-free communities - removal of pokies from pubs and clubs remains the best-indicated and the most effective harm minimisation measure available.

## **Prevalence Studies – Need for Consistency**

A fundamental component of each SEIS since the initial one of 2008 has been the prevalence study. The previous 2017 SEIS notes limitations to the collection of accurate and reliable Tasmanian data on the use of poker machines, including accurate frequency and expenditure figures.

Prevalence studies, or a cross-sectional analysis, are intended to provide an analysis of data from a population (or representative subset) at a specific point of time. As such, each SEIS' prevalence study provides a valuable snapshot of the status of the industry, and some key community indicators.

However, the approach to each prevalence study from one SEIS to another can be approached differently by the respective researchers. This makes meaningful 'comparison and contrast' between successive SEIS' difficult as data types are not necessarily consistent from one study to the next.

Of greater concern is the accuracy of the prevalence study, particularly in capturing an accurate picture of the level of problematic or at-risk use of poker machines. We know that a substantial phone survey requiring recall and disclosure of poker machine use and expenditure is likely to be highly confronting and therefore avoided by most who fit in the higher risk categories of poker machine use. This is not necessarily true in relation to the use of other forms of gambling. I note that we can get a sense of the variation in accuracy by looking at expenditure figures captured in the previous SEIS, extrapolating them and comparing them to what we know are the actual expenditure figures publicly available. The expenditure figures relating to Keno

captured in the SEIS prevalence survey equate to about 92% of the actual expenditure figures across the same period; so, fairly accurate. The expenditure figures relating to poker machines captured in the SEIS prevalence survey equate to about 28% of the actual expenditure figures across the same period; so, a fairly extreme underestimation.

There are frequent claims from government and the poker machine industry as to the very small incidence of problem or at-risk gambling based on the SEIS prevalence survey, with no acknowledgement of the reality of underestimation inherent in those figures. For responsible public policy and appropriate regulation to be made, clarity is required as to the accuracy of these figures and the manner in which they can be utilised as representative. An improved method of prevalence surveying, coupled with an indicative weighting or similar to account for the expected level of underestimation would greatly assist with the public understanding and conversation about this issue, and ensure a more accurate basis for policy and regulation.

To make the most of the SEIS process, for both policy makers and community stakeholders, it would be useful for a standardised prevalence study format to be developed and implemented for all future social and economic impact studies under the *Gaming Control Act 1993*. A standardised prevalence study methodology, format and approach would facilitate a meaningful capacity to 'compare and contrast' between studies, which would in turn enable a more accurate measurement of changes in any key indicators as well as progress, or otherwise, in the implementation of any recommended reforms.

Additionally, the incorporation of public policy benchmarks, mapping whether SEIS recommendations have been implemented partially, in full or not at all, would provide an objective evaluation of developments, or lack of, from one study to the next.

The impact of harm caused by poker machine use on Tasmanian health and mental health services, family support services, welfare services, criminal justice system, domestic violence services, housing and homelessness services, productivity and level of unemployment, is not currently measured and monitored by the state government so as to effectively inform policy development and regulation relating to poker machines. Rigorous mechanisms and means of identifying, assessing and monitoring the true and full costs of pokies addiction and harm must also be included in the scope of future SEIS.

### **Recommendations**

- Develop a standardised prevalence study methodology to enable clear and direct comparison and contrast of key indicators between each successive Social and Economic Impact study, including an indication of the expected level of underestimation.
- Incorporate public policy benchmarks as a standardised feature consistent from one SEIS to the next, mapping whether successive SEIS' recommendations have been implemented partially, in full or not at all.

## **Conclusion**

There are two broad elements to the SEIS' scope:

- provision of an analysis of key trends in gambling and comparisons with other states and territories, including, but not limited to, an update of the gambling industry structure and characteristics, changes and trends in gambling behaviours, and revenue; and
- a gambling prevalence study to enable comparisons with previous Tasmanian prevalence studies.

Additionally, as summarised in the [SEIS Discussion Paper](#), identified potential key areas of interest for public comment include:

- Costs and benefits of gambling
- Problem gambling and adequacy of support services
- Economic development of the gambling industry
- Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on gambling participation

While focusing predominantly on the impact of poker machines in the community, this submission seeks to highlight the unique circumstances facing Tasmania due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, highlighting in particular inadequate long-term recognition and management of increased vulnerability and other associated challenges.

This submission also seeks to highlight the growing recognition for increased evidence-based harm minimisation measures, including fundamental reforms such as the immediate implementation of a \$1 bet limit on all poker machines, whether located in casinos or in hotels and clubs.

At the time of the 2016-17 Joint Parliamentary Committee inquiry into Future Gaming Markets, there was a sense that the inquiry provided a once in a generation opportunity to fundamentally reshape Tasmania's gambling industry and reassert the social and economic health of Tasmanians as the primary focus and concern, over that of vested industry interests, of the state's public policy regime. Events surrounding the 2018 state election, unfortunately punctured that hope and optimism.

Therefore, it is hoped that the combined impetus of the urgent challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic in both the immediate and long term, combined with the scheduled fifth SEIS, will provide the long over-due circuit breaker to shift all stakeholders' understanding of the far-reaching and negative effect inappropriately regulated poker machines access presents to Tasmania's social and economic health.

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# Appendices

## Appendix A. M. Webb MLC – Parliamentary questions put to Government on the topic of gambling

### 1. Future Gaming Markets policy, submitted 31 October 2019

Questions asked by Hon Meg Webb MLC on 31 October 2019 answered for the Govt by Hon Roger Jaensch Minister for Human Services 26 Nov 2019

In the Premier's evidence to the Joint Select Committee into Future Gaming Markets and as set out in the Hodgman Liberal Government's Post-2023 Gaming Structural Framework, it states that 'The right to operate poker machines post 2023 will be allocated and priced by a market-based mechanism, such as a tender', and also that 'Hotels and clubs that had machines in place in March 2016 will not require any form of retrospective approvals.'

**QUESTION (1)** How will a market-based mechanism apply to hotels and clubs that currently have poker machines?

**QUESTION (2)** Will all hotels and clubs pay a licence fee for their right to operate poker machines?

**QUESTION (3) (a)** How many individual licenses will potentially be allocated to hotels and clubs under this proposed model?

**QUESTION (3) (b)** Will a licence be required for each individual location or will companies who own multiple venues apply for one licence to operate across those multiple locations?

**ANSWERS (1) to (3)** The Government's Future of Gaming in Tasmania – FGM – policy, released in February 2018, replaced the Post-2023 Gaming Structural Framework and was informed by the outcomes of the Joint Select Committee on Future Gaming Markets.

The FGM policy establishes, amongst other things, the structural framework for electronic gaming machine – EGM – operation in hotels and clubs from 1 July 2023. This includes licensing the right to operate EGMs in hotels and clubs on an individual venue operator model and going to market for the licence to monitor the network of EGMs in hotels and clubs. There are currently 93 licensed hotels and clubs with EGMs.

The Government has established a dedicated Future Gaming Market project team to manage the significant and complex restructure of the gaming industry, which will require legislative amendments to implement. The details of the new regulatory model are under development and will be reflected in legislation to amend the Gaming Control Act 1993.

Due to the complexity of the legislative amendments required to implement the FGM policy, and the need to appropriately consult on these amendments, the Government does not intend to introduce legislation any earlier than March 2020.

**QUESTION (4)** What is the estimated market value of each of these individual licences and what is their combined market value?

**QUESTION (5)** What economic modelling has been done or commissioned by the Government on the overall impact on the Tasmanian economy of the proposed new licensing arrangements?

In the joint Tasmanian Hospitality Association/Federal Group submission to the Joint Select Committee into Future Gaming Markets, the industry stated that its modelling estimated that each poker machine venue

would be worth, on average, over \$1.5 million more under direct licensing (assuming a total state tax take of 38 per cent).

**QUESTION (6)** Given the tax take stated in the THA/Federal Group submission to the Joint Select Committee into Future Gaming Markets is almost exactly the same as that set out in the Liberal Party's election policy under the direct licensing plan, can the Treasurer confirm whether the industry estimated figure of an increase in value of \$1.5 million for each poker machine venue accords with Treasury modelling?

**ANSWERS (4) to (6)** The Future Gaming Market project team is continuing to undertake the significant and complex work associated with implementing the Government's FGM policy, including the development of licence fees, tax rates and licence terms. Government has not yet settled on the licence fees, tax rates or licence term that will apply to hotels and clubs under the FGM policy and therefore no modelling is currently available.

## **2. Gambling and Mental Health, submitted 31 October 2019.**

**Questions asked by Hon Meg Webb MLC on 31 Oct 2019 answered for the Govt by Hon Jeremy Rockliff MP Minister for Health and Wellbeing on 26 Nov 2019**

According to recent Victorian research, gambling harm is estimated to account for 22 per cent of costs to Victoria's mental health sector.

With the Government intending to keep poker machines in Tasmanian local communities for a further 20 years beyond 2023 –

**Question (1)** Has the Government assessed and quantified the extent to which gambling harm has contributed to date to the level of mental ill-health and the cost of mental health services in our state?

**Answer:** There has been no assessment of the impact of gambling harm on the level of mental ill-health or the cost of mental health services in Tasmania.

**Question (2)** Has the Government modelled the likely contribution of gambling harm to our state's future level of mental ill-health and cost of mental health services under the proposed new licensing model?

**Answer:** There has been no modelling of the likely contribution of gambling harm to the state's future level of mental ill-health and cost of mental health services.

**Question (3) (a)** Do Tasmanian mental health services collect data about co-occurrence of gambling harm for people attending state-funded mental health services; and (b) if not, why not?

**Answer (3)(a)** No.

**Answer (3)(b)** Gambling-related activities are not part of the standard national minimum dataset for mental health services.

**Question (4)** Does the Government have other data sources that quantify or indicate the co-occurrence of mental ill-health and gambling harm in this state?

**Answer:** The Department of Health is not aware of any data sources that would quantify or indicate the co-occurrence of mental ill-health and gambling harm in Tasmania.

**Question (5) Does the Government have data on the co-occurrence of gambling harm with suicides in this state?**

**Answer:** The Department of Health in partnership with the Department of Justice and the Tasmanian Coroner's Office is developing the Tasmanian Suicide Register, which will provide the capacity to analyse information captured as part of coronial investigations of suicide. This information will include identified stressors, including any financial stressors.

### **3. Gambling Harm and domestic violence, submitted on 31 Oct 2019**

**Questions by Hon Meg Webb MLC on 31 Oct 2019 answered for the Govt by the Hon Michael Ferguson MP Minister for Finance on 31 Oct 2019**

Australian research has found a statistically significant correlation between poker machine density and police-recorded domestic violence rates among postcodes. Further, research in Victoria, South Australia and Tasmania has shown that more than half the people receiving problem gambling treatment have recent experience of domestic violence, either as survivors or perpetrators.

With the Government intending to keep poker machines in Tasmanian local communities for a further 20 years beyond 2023:—

Questions:

Has the Government assessed and quantified the extent to which gambling harm has contributed to date to the level of family violence and cost of family violence services in Tasmania?

Has the Government modelled the likely contribution of gambling harm to our state's future level of family violence and cost of family violence services under the proposed new licencing model?

(a) Do Government-funded family violence services collect data about the presence of gambling harm for people seeking assistance for family violence; and (b) if not, why not?

Does the Government have other data sources that quantify or indicate the co-occurrence of family violence and gambling harm in this state?

**ANSWER:** Tasmania, like all other Australian jurisdictions, recognises that homelessness, family violence and resorting to crime are complex social issues that stem from a range of contributing factors, and it would be misleading to isolate any one factor as the cause.

Homelessness and family violence services have screening tools to assess the needs of clients, which includes some financial information. The screening processes ensure that people engaged with these services are provided with appropriate and relevant support.

Analysis of the extent of crime leading to court-imposed sentences is challenging, due to an absence of specific data collection associated with gambling-related crime.

The Government is supporting people at-risk of problem gambling through a range of harm minimisation measures targeted at industry, the community and the individual. These measures which are some of the strongest nationally and will remain under the proposed new licensing model, include:

The Tasmanian Liquor and Gaming Commission's Responsible Gambling Mandatory Code of Practice for Tasmania and rules for gambling operators;

Community education and support services, including counselling, funded under the Community Support Levy and administered by the Gambling Support Program;

The Tasmanian Gambling Exclusion Scheme, which requires people wanting to self-exclude to speak with a counsellor in recognition of the co-morbidity factors generally present for problem gamblers;

The National Consumer Protection Framework for online gambling; and

A three-yearly study on the economic and social impact of gambling in Tasmania.

#### **4. Gambling harm and Crime, submitted 31 October 2019**

Questions asked by Hon Meg Webb MLC on 31 October 2019 answered for the Govt by Hon Michael Ferguson Minister for Finance 25 March 2020

Australian research has indicated that the rate of problem gamblers within prison populations appears to be substantially higher than prevalence rates observed among the general population. For example, in a Victorian study the rate of problem gambling among prisoners was one in three compared to a general population proportion of 0.7 per cent. Further, 37 per cent prisoners surveyed reported having committed a gambling-related offence at some point in their lifetime—

With the Government intending to keep poker machines in Tasmanian local communities for a further 20 years beyond 2023:

Questions:

- (1) Has the Government assessed and quantified the extent to which gambling harm has contributed to date to the level of crime and cost of incarceration in Tasmania?
- (2) Has the Government modelled the likely contribution of gambling harm to our state's future level of crime and cost of incarceration under the proposed new licencing model?
- (3) (a) Does the Government collect data about the presence of gambling harm for people convicted of crime in Tasmania, especially fraud, stealing or other financial-related crimes; and (b) if not, why not?
- (4) Does the Government have other data sources that quantify or indicate the co-occurrence of crime and gambling harm in this state?

ANSWER: Tasmania, like all other Australian jurisdictions, recognises that homelessness, family violence and resorting to crime are complex social issues that stem from a range of contributing factors, and it would be misleading to isolate any one factor as the cause.

Homelessness and family violence services have screening tools to assess the needs of clients, which includes some financial information. The screening processes ensure that people engaged with these services are provided with appropriate and relevant support.

Analysis of the extent of crime leading to court-imposed sentences is challenging, due to an absence of specific data collection associated with gambling-related crime.

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The Tasmanian Liquor and Gaming Commission's Responsible Gambling Mandatory Code of Practice for Tasmania and rules for gambling operators;

Community education and support services, including counselling, funded under the Community Support Levy and administered by the Gambling Support Program;

The Tasmanian Gambling Exclusion Scheme, which requires people wanting to self-exclude to speak with a counsellor in recognition of the co-morbidity factors generally present for problem gamblers;

The National Consumer Protection Framework for online gambling; and

A three-yearly study on the economic and social impact of gambling in Tasmania

#### **5. Gambling harm and homelessness, submitted 31 October 2019**

Questions asked by Hon Meg Webb MLC on 31 October 2019 answered for the Govt by Hon Michael Ferguson Minister for Finance 25 March 2020

Research indicates a connection in Australia between gambling harm and homelessness; a link that doesn't exist in other jurisdictions where poker machines are located only in destination gambling venues.

With the Government intending to keep poker machines in Tasmanian local communities for a further 20 years beyond 2023:—

Questions:

Has the Government assessed and quantified the extent to which gambling harm has contributed to date to the level of homelessness and cost of homelessness services in Tasmania?

Has the Government modelled the likely contribution of gambling harm to our state's future level of homelessness and cost of homelessness services under the proposed new licencing model?

(a) Do Government-funded homelessness services collect data about the presence of gambling harm for people seeking assistance for homelessness; and (b) if not, why not?

Does the Government have other data sources that quantify or indicate the co-occurrence of homelessness and gambling harm in this state?

ANSWER: Tasmania, like all other Australian jurisdictions, recognises that homelessness, family violence and resorting to crime are complex social issues that stem from a range of contributing factors, and it would be misleading to isolate any one factor as the cause.

Homelessness and family violence services have screening tools to assess the needs of clients, which includes some financial information. The screening processes ensure that people engaged with these services are provided with appropriate and relevant support.

Analysis of the extent of crime leading to court-imposed sentences is challenging, due to an absence of specific data collection associated with gambling-related crime.

The Government is supporting people at-risk of problem gambling through a range of harm minimisation measures targeted at industry, the community and the individual. These measures which are some of the strongest nationally and will remain under the proposed new licensing model, include:

The Tasmanian Liquor and Gaming Commission's Responsible Gambling Mandatory Code of Practice for Tasmania and rules for gambling operators;

Community education and support services, including counselling, funded under the Community Support Levy and administered by the Gambling Support Program;

The Tasmanian Gambling Exclusion Scheme, which requires people wanting to self-exclude to speak with a counsellor in recognition of the co-morbidity factors generally present for problem gamblers;

The National Consumer Protection Framework for online gambling; and

A three-yearly study on the economic and social impact of gambling in Tasmania.

## **6. Gambling during COVID-19 shutdown, submitted 7 May 2020**

Questions asked by the Hon Meg Webb MLC on 7 May 2020 answered for the Government by Hon Michael Ferguson Minister for Finance (Q1) and Hon Roger Jaensch Minister for Human Services (Q2-6) on 4 June 2020

Given that face-to-face gambling venues are closed during the COVID-19 shutdown, and many habitual gamblers and those who have a problem with gambling will be experiencing an enforced pause to their face-to-face gambling activity:

**QUESTION 1. What increased and/or additional risks have been identified by the Government during the COVID-19 crisis in relation to:**

- a) levels of gambling activity;
- b) levels of gambling harm;
- c) impact on those who are in an at-risk gambling category; and
- d) impact on the families of those in at-risk gambling categories?

**ANSWER:** The Government does not have possession of any research into additional levels of risk during the relatively brief period of time that has elapsed during which gambling venues have been closed to patrons.

**QUESTION 2. What initiatives have been developed under the Government's gambling support program to specifically address the changed circumstances and potential increased risks during the COVID-19 crisis?**

**ANSWER:** The Gambling Support Program (GSP) is working closely with Gamblers Help specialist support providers to monitor changes in demand, volume and client needs, as well as collecting anecdotal information about clients' experiences through COVID-19.

Gamblers Help Services support providers are providing alternative accessible support during this COVID-19 crisis. Advice regarding gambling and COVID-19 is available through [Gambling Help Online](#) and the [Tasmanian Government Coronavirus site](#). In addition, the GSP is developing COVID-19 messaging for distribution through the [GSP website](#), [Know Your Odds website](#) and the [Know Your Odds Facebook page](#).

Finally, The GSP is monitoring emerging academic and economic studies focussed on the effects of COVID-19 on gambling, including potential shifts to online gambling.

**QUESTION 3. Has additional funding been provided specifically to gambling support services for proactive outreach during the COVID-19 crisis?**

**ANSWER:** Support providers have reported a decrease in the number of people accessing gambling specialist support services and are redirecting existing capacity including undertaking proactive support to existing and recent clients and their families as appropriate.

**QUESTION 4.** Has additional funding been invested during the COVID-19 crisis in the Government's public health education campaigns relating to gambling?

**ANSWER:** No, although the development of a planned online gambling campaign has been brought

**QUESTION 5.** Has there been an increase during the COVID-19 crisis in the frequency of media and online advertisements promoting the public health messaging on gambling and promoting gambling support services?

**ANSWER:** No

**QUESTION 6.** How are the Government's gambling-related web-based sites, e.g. the Know Your Odds website and Facebook page and the Communities Tasmania gambling webpage, being used to provide the Tasmanian public with information, advice or messages specifically relating to the COVID-19 crisis and gambling harm and gambling services?

**ANSWER:** Messaging regarding COVID-19 and gambling is being provided through Gambling Help Online and the Tasmanian Government Coronavirus Additional messaging reflecting this advice is in development and will be delivered through the GSP website, Know Your Odds website, the Know Your Odds Facebook page.

## **7. Online gambling losses during COVID-19 shutdown**

Questions asked by the Hon Meg Webb MLC on 7 May 2020 and answered for the Government by the Minister for Finance Hon Michael Ferguson MP on 4 June 2020

I (*Ms Webb*) tomorrow to ask the Honourable Leader of the Government —

Noting that there is concern expressed about an increase in online gambling during the time face-to-face gambling venues are closed, with many gambling-related activities such as racing having also ceased, and with people spending more time in isolation at home:

**QUESTION: 1.** How does the Government measure the level of use and quantum of losses to online gambling in this state?

**QUESTION: 2. (a)** Is there an accurate and credible measurement of the levels of use and quantum of losses to online gambling prior to the COVID-19 crisis in Tasmania; and

**QUESTION: 2. (b)** If so, what are the pre-COVID-19 Tasmanian figures on use and losses to online gambling?

**QUESTION: 3.** How is the Government monitoring or measuring the levels of use and quantum of losses to online gambling during the COVID-19 crisis in Tasmania?

**ANSWERS 1-3:** It is difficult to obtain data on the level of online gambling by persons based in Tasmania. This is

due to the different forms of online gambling, the cross-border nature of the service, that some people are gambling on illegal overseas sites, and the limited availability of industry data.

While some data from online gambling taxed in Tasmania is available, information on the volume of spend by Tasmanians on other products offered online such as keno and lotteries is difficult to obtain. The introduction of the point of consumption (POC) tax in Tasmania from 1 January 2020 provides an indication of Tasmanian betting levels. The tax applies to all wagering and betting types or products offered to customers in Tasmania. This includes bets placed online or through a physical TAB terminal located in Tasmania.

There are limitations in using this data to assess trends in online gambling pre and during COVID-19. These include the lack of historical trend data and that the tax collected is not separately reported for online and terrestrial gambling. However, based on both sources, POC tax revenue year-to-date to 30 April 2020 is tracking to budget, with no noticeable spikes relating to increased activity.

Research is currently underway by the University of Sydney to determine how COVID-19 has affected gambling participation in Australia.

**QUESTION: 4. Is the Government aware of an increase in the use of and losses to online gambling during the COVID-19 crisis?**

**ANSWER:** It has been reported by credit bureaus and some major banks that consumer spending on gambling has increased during the period of COVID-19 restrictions. Changes to consumer spending habits are to be expected due to the restrictions imposed. Spending on online gambling has fluctuated over this period, however it is too early to draw any meaningful conclusions from the limited data available.

**QUESTION: 5. (a) Is the Government monitoring or measuring changes in the amount of advertising for online gambling in Tasmania during the COVID-19 crisis?**

**QUESTION: 5. (b) (i) If so, has there been an increase in advertising; and**

**(ii) what is the data on that increase?**

**ANSWER:** When a complaint is received about gambling advertising (including online advertising) of the sole Tasmanian licensed provider, an investigation is undertaken by the Liquor and Gaming Branch of the Department of Treasury and Finance. As at 26 May 2020, no complaints have been received since the shut-down of gambling venues from 23 March 2020.

## **8. Reopening of Tasmania's poker machine rooms on 26 June 2020, submitted 25 June 2020.**

Questions asked by Meg Webb MLC on 25 June 2020 and answered by the Minister for Finance, the Hon Michael Ferguson MP on 25 August 2020

In relation to the planned reopening of Tasmania's poker machine rooms on 26 June 2020, and the government's apparent protocol of responding to the COVID-19 pandemic with an evidence-based approach based on public health advice:

**QUESTION (1)** Does the Government acknowledge that the resumption of operation of poker machine gaming rooms in Tasmania is not comparable to the resumption of the other food, beverage and event aspects of the hospitality industry as, in addition to managing COVID-19 health risks, evidence points to the use of poker machines presenting additional and unique economic and social risks at this time?

**ANSWER:** When the COVID-19 public health restrictions caused many businesses and services to temporarily close, the reopening of these businesses and services was informed by public health advice

that it was safe to do so. Electronic gaming machines (EGMs) are legally permitted to operate in Tasmania. The reopening of gaming venues, including those operating EGMs, has been determined based on public health advice.

**QUESTION (2)** Has the plan and timeline for resuming the operation of poker machines in Tasmania been data-driven and based on health, economic and social impact analysis?

(a) if so, please provide that analysis

(b) if not, please provide the full rationale and factors considered in making the determination that the resumption of poker machine use was appropriate to occur on 26 June?

**ANSWER:** On 26 June 2020, gaming venues, including those with EGMs, were allowed to open under the stage 3 easing of restrictions, along with many other legal businesses subject to public health advice. Each venue is operating under a COVID-19 safety plan that implements the public health measures required under the *COVID Safe Workplace Guidelines for the Gambling Industry*.

**QUESTION (3)** Noting the clear evidence from the Global Financial Crisis (GFC) in 2008-09 where government stimulus payments were shown to have been diverted to poker machines causing losses to spike substantially, what impact analysis has been done to assess the risk that restarting access to poker machines at this time will erode the effectiveness of both Federal and State government economic stimulus efforts (including, but not limited to, increased Job Seeker payments, Job Keeper payments, and early-accessed personal superannuation lump sums) designed to ensure household essential requirements are met and local economies most effectively supported?

**ANSWER:** EGMs are a well-regulated gambling activity in Tasmania. Based on the *2017 Social and Economic Impact Study of Gambling in Tasmania*, Tasmania has a relatively low incidence of problem gambling (estimated at 0.6 per cent of Tasmanian adults) compared to other Australian jurisdictions. EGMs are legally permitted to operate in Tasmania and the reopening of gaming venues was based on public health advice that it was safe to do so.

**QUESTION (4)** (a) Has the government been lobbied to reopen public access to gaming rooms; and  
(b) if so, by whom?

**ANSWER:** The reopening of gaming venues was based on public health advice.

## Appendix B. Rebuild Tassie with Less Pokies Harm - petition from Meg Webb MLC

Petition was open May/June 2020 - <https://megwebb.com.au/petition/>

### Called on the Tasmanian Government to:

- Develop initiatives to encourage pubs and clubs to become pokies-free and be reborn as community-building social hubs
- Reach out with continued additional support for people who struggle with gambling, and their families
- Commit to legislating evidence-based harm minimisation measures, like slower spin speeds, lower maximum bet limits, lower jackpots and shorter opening hours
- Release government modelling on the social and economic impact of its proposed new poker machine licensing arrangements.

### Summary of optional comments left by some signatories to the petition, by postcode:

(NB first six comments are non-Tasmanian residents, all others are Tasmanian postcodes)

Postcode	What's your message for rebuilding Tassie with less pokies harm?
2443	The pokies destroy lives.
2880	Being a resident of NSW, AND SEEING FIRST HAND THE DAMAGE And waste that these machines have had on families and individuals, I put my full support behind this petition. I know mathematically a player has no chance of winning, there is an ABC catalyst program that clearly explains it. May be achieved.
3056	I grew up in tassie and I still call it home. The pokies wreak havoc on a vulnerable part of the Tasmania (let alone Australian) population. Tasmanian government owes its constituency the respect dignity of removing these disgusting, revenue-raising machines
4005	Let Tassie lead the country reduce the pokies or do not reinstate
5074	Poker machines are a dangerous product. Tasmania should get rid of them for good.
5074	Dangerous product designed to addict. Propose a buy back scheme similar to ACT
7000	This is an opportunity to empower people, break a destructive cycle and invest in a healthy vibrant and empowered Tasmania
7000	Pokies are evil and rip money from the poor and addicted and put little to no money back into the community ban these disgusting things!

7000	We run a staunch pokies free venue because the cost to our family from pokies exceeds \$1 million dollars. It's not just the money but the subterfuge, theft, manipulation and suicide attempts that flowed from the problem gambling. The breakdown in trust manifests and the lies cause the long term harm.
7000	Please, we have so much damage in our community as a result of the industry that is focused on taking the money of people, from people. The odds of people winning are so low that you may as well write them a cheque, or just give them your credit card and the PIN. We have to either get rid of poker machines or at least limit them to the casinos.
7000	The Pokies cause great harm to many people in our community and it is therefore immoral for the government to make money from this heinous industry.
7000	We must apply to this issue the same primacy of compassion and care, high quality evidence and risk assessment and prevention, and policy and governance expertise that has brought Tasmanians through the Covid-19 crisis so well.
7000	Keep poker machines confined to the casinos, and bring back the less intelligent addictive types of machines.
7000	No more pokies!
7000	The pokies are a scourge on society
7000	Pokies are a blight on our community. To add insult to the injury they cause, the fact that Federal Hotels and the Farrel family has a monopoly on Pokie licenses incenses me. That some of Tasmania's wealthiest people should profit from the poorest and most vulnerable is immoral, and that the Liberal party who are in Government both supports and profits from this as well is exactly why I will never vote for them.
7000	Pokies are electronic crystal meth!
7000	No to pokies!
7000	pokies harm families and the most vulnerable people in our communities.  Stop them now so these people can put their precious resources back into their communities, instead of into the pockets of greedy pokies owners.
7000	Pokies actually provide less employment, as all the money gets funnelled into the Farrell family in Sydney, rather than being spent in Tasmanian small businesses.
7000	Re-opening local pub spaces so they area free from pokies/keno. We can't advertise smoking, we shouldn't advertise gambling.
7000	Pokies are a vampire sucking on the resources of Tasmania's most vulnerable people. Give them a break and allow them to get on with their lives, contributing to our community and ban the poker machines.
7000	Ask any pokies addict if they really want to give away all their and their family's money to wealthy people who couldn't care less about them.

7000	I've always been against pokies, but what really convinced me was the recent stories from gambling addicts who said that this time without access has given them the chance to stop the cycle, save money and repair relationships. Pubs and clubs should use other forms of entertainment at their venues which bring people together and support employment for the arts industry and community sector (e.g. fundraising quiz nights, live music, comedians, pub choir etc).
7004	These machines are nothing but profits of doom.
7004	Pokies. #whobenefits?
7004	Stop taxing the poor
7004	Keep families free from harm. Keep individuals free from addiction. Stop the pokies in pubs.
7004	The lockdowns during the Coronavirus epidemic demonstrated that many people who previously played the pokies were better off financially and inevitably for their health as well.
7004	Never mind shorter opening hours and lower betting limits- let's just ban the things eh?
7004	Cut the pokies and keep the money in the community, not in the pokie licence holder's pocket. Pokies destroy lives of too many people.
7004	Let us continue to remove the temptations of gambling and build on the better relationships gained due to the lockdown.
7004	Get Pokies out of pubs and clubs. Keep the money in the pockets of family's that need it!
7004	Get pokies out please. They are sucking the State of useful funds and are psychologically destructive of lives and families.
7005	Gambling ruins families and lives. Let's look after our children's futures and the welfare of all Tasmanian people. Let's all care for each other without losing our money to people who do not live in our state nor acknowledge the damage they encourage with their poker machines.
7005	Let's rebuild and develop a better Tasmanian without pokies
7005	What do the Farrell's do for Tasmania?
7005	No return for pokies. Nobody needs them.
7005	Please stop the devastation of our community by those who prey on the addicted and make millions of dollars of profit out of our vulnerable people. Our entire community suffers from these parasites.
7005	I am a retired Clinical Psychologist and I have provided help and support to families destroyed by gambling addiction. Please stop exploiting the vulnerable
7005	Get the pokies out of pubs and clubs, starting with low socio-economic areas. That's most of them and shows the rapacity of the Federal group.
7005	Restrict pokies for a healthier and wealthier Tassie!

7005	We have had our community devastated by pokie machines and those who profit from them. It's the perfect time to help our community and stop the profiteering from the sickness of problem gambling. Let's help people not profits.
7007	Families get decimated by addiction to these insidious machines. Those addicted often become criminals. Poker machines use a range of design features that leverage psychology to keep people playing so how can this be supported by our government?
7007	Pokies are such a harmful and lazy way of lining a few rich people's pockets and collect some tax dollars. We can do better than that.
7007	Pokies are a scourge on our society. Designed to Addict. They have no place in Tasmania.
7008	Mr Premier. Please close the pokies and recognise that the money that anyone makes from the misery of pokies addiction is as bad as drug pushers making profit from drug addiction.
7008	We need to lessen the harm and suffering caused to families by addiction to poker machines. Big greedy businesses profiting from the misery of others is just plain wrong!
7008	Enough is enough. With people on both sides of my family broken by pokies and other pub gambling, I cannot accept it as a legitimate business model. It is a greedy and predatory thing breaking people and communities only for a very few to get wealthy at the top.
7008	Reduce the stake that players can bet each spin. Eliminate pokies from suburban venues and limit numbers at the two casino sites as well.
7008	Our state's economy shouldn't be propped up by people's suffering.
7008	Venues that have pokies have failed in implementing any effective harm reduction for pokie addicts and therefore should not have licences to operate pokies. It is so hypocritical for our government to have pokies as a legal entertainment when there is undeniable proof that pokies are as harmful and addictive as illegal drugs crack cocaine. and heroin
7008	Far too much destruction of families n individual lives caused by gambling abuse
7009	casinos and clubs only
7009	Stop milking the vulnerable you weak gutted bastards.
7009	Re building without pokies, Happy times ahead, pokies contribute to much to breakdowns, violence, poverty, crime, suicide, mental health,
7009	I guess the challenge is to work toward significant replacement of the State's dependency on gambling revenue as the conflict of interest must be intense.
7009	Pokies are dopey.
7009	The pokies take millions from a state economy that can't afford to lose it, from low socio-economic areas that have enough struggles as it is. The problems caused by gambling put further strain on these communities The winners are not the handful of workers that pubs clubs employee, but the already rich and wealthy. Pokies are an unnecessary harm. If VIC AFL clubs can lose them, so can we.
7009	Gambling does so much damage to families and deprives children of necessities.

7009	Less pokies more money back into the local economy
7009	Life without pokies is a life less susceptible to pain and life more likely to be worth living.
7009	Yes, sign me up!
7010	Pokies remove the family atmosphere of any place they are put in, they take over the space for live bands and make areas of Australia poorer in more than monetary terms. Put them back in casinos exclusively.
7010	Every problem gambler hurts family friends employers etc
7010	I know exactly the pain and suffering pokies brings bought nothing to me but pain suffering I was compulsive was always in pubs Glenorchy playing pokies if I hadn't stopped I dare say I'd probably be in gaol
7010	At the very least, some addictive features could be reduced. Eg, slowing.
7010	Having worked with people addicted to these things, I have come to the conclusion we just do not need these things in our society. These machines are simply too destructive to too many lives.
7010	My life was put on hold due to pokie Addiction was horrible for years can't explain the suffering they caused me and my family
7010	Get rid of the pokies and save people, their families and homes.
7010	My message is I was horrendously addicted to pokies in Glenorchy was well over 120 grand in credit cards through the pokies I paid the debt back over 5 years haven't stepped foot in an oasis area ever since as I know I could go down the same path again now running a business and happily married
7011	Need more social housing. Research into online gambling in Tasmania.
7011	Good riddance.
7015	If we cannot get rid of pokies then place a social tax on them that goes towards programs to mitigate the damage that these machines and their greedy masters create in our society.
7015	Gambling makes no economic sense. It draws money from productive investment and severely harms families and community.
7015	It's easy if an industry is harmful to our health then we can't afford it. No sweetheart deals with profiteers and let's look after our communities. No pokies send the machines off shore to the profiteers who live there.
7015	Pokies and gambling reduce productivity and social wellbeing as well as encouraging corruption. They have no place in Tassie.
7015	Maybe there will be some more money in the family budget for children and their needs. Too many bottle shops too. Why in shopping centres (shoreline) just across the road from the Shoreline hotel. etc. Like point 3 .

7015	I don't gamble - just never seen the point. But I'm not against other people doing it if they choose. EXCEPT when the odds are stacked against them as they are with poker machines. Everything about them is designed to lure, captivate and addict.
7015	Now is a great time to make positive community changes when the hospitality sector resumes. We do not need to rely on pokie income. Any party that supports the gambling industry will not get my vote.
7015	No more pokies!
7015	Wonderful for people to not feel so upset all the time over money shortage as the pokies have taken it!!!
7016	Ban pokies in pubs and clubs.
7018	Gambling ruins lives.
7018	Let's use this time as we recover from Covid to reinvent ourselves and remove harmful pokies from our communities. It's a clean slate right now, start afresh with the intention to help vulnerable Tasmanians.
7018	We do not need these soulless, addictive devices in pubs and clubs. I'd be happy for them to be banned from Tasmania entirely but would compromise on restricting them to casinos.
7018	They do nothing but harm, create nothing worthwhile and are scourges on our society so get pokies out of our communities
7018	Gambling is non productive. Spend money on Tasmanian produced goods and services. We have some of the best in the world.
7018	Pokies harm families and in turn children. Children are suffering enough they don't deserve the poverty and neglect that pokies cause them.
7018	Not just less get rid of them all together, hopefully after this lock down the people who normally visit these sites are waking up to themselves with the extra money they have?
7018	Keep the money in the wallets of those that need it.
7018	Please stick to your guns on this important issue. Gambling revenue for the government is exploiting weakness not improving society
7018	Let's make our communities healthier and happier by reducing pokies. Help people to control their addiction. Keep the money previously lost to pokies within families for their benefit.
7018	Please put Tasmanians welfare before donor dollars. No pokies in pubs and clubs.
7019	However, we must also control how much internet gambling goes on, for this is possibly even worse, as it's so hard to manage by an authority, and so addictive, some people will probably die in their chairs while online.
7020	Without ridding the state of this scourge of society...misery will continue
7020	That we should see the existence of pokies as a period in time that is not everlasting. We do not require pokies in pubs to sustain an economy if that economy is built on exploitation of the vulnerable. In the future we will look back on this period with sadness but reassured it was only a 30 year aberration.

7024	This is the perfect time to rethink where we want our state to be. We need to make some hard decisions - but if we don't do it now, it will just get more difficult in the future - as we return to normal I care about the gamblers and their families.
7025	Rid Tasmania of this blight on our society and bring back our unique pub culture that Tassie used to have with live music and A healthy social atmosphere
7030	we can live without them
7050	let tassie change
7050	Fewer machines would be more money in the community and more good food in the children stomachs.
7050	Pokies hurt badly whilst making a few rich. A dirty way to make money. Less harm...less pokies please
7050	Until you know someone related to an addicted person you will never understand how important it is to do all in your power to minimise the harm
7050	Please get rid of pokies in pubs and clubs. They do untold harm in many communities. To profit by them is really just amoral
7050	Let's spend our money in a way that will benefit our local economy and our Tasmanian families.
7050	Stop scamming Tasmanians. Pokies herald poverty - except for the Federal Group!
7050	Pokies are a very regressive way for getting income for our State, and destructive for the community.
7050	Do no harm. Gambling creates harm. No more pickles. Please.
7050	Start protecting Tasmanian people's welfare!
7050	Let's build communities, not line the pockets of a wealthy few
7050	No pokies!
7050	Even if the Federal Group owns the Tas Liberal Party, it cannot be allowed to be more important to the Tasmanian Government than Tasmanians are.
7052	I worked in gaming for 15 years. I witnessed the damage they caused, not only poker machines but gaming in general. The state is better off without them, period!
7052	Reduce the access to pokies. Help stop the addiction.
7052	Pokies are causing so much harm in our communities. Take the Covid shutdown to further push for their removal from pubs and clubs.
7053	Pokies are designed to be addictive. Players are attracted to the venues but need to have community and Casinos which provide entertainment and limit gambling. It is a source of family poverty and stress. The amounts would be better spent stimulating the economy.
7053	Pokies are not part of my desired Tasmania.
7053	This is a social justice issue, Tasmania can do so much better in how it supports the health and wellbeing of its most vulnerable people.

7053	Not in pubs!
7054	<p>Pokie machines are designed to be addictive, and they are rigged so that the more you play, the more you'll lose.</p> <p>It's unbelievable that such a deliberate, harm-causing device is allowed to flourish in our society. We tax cigarettes and have had strong ad campaigns and now have plain packaging. Everyone knows they are harmful. We are starting to have campaigns about the harm of alcohol and there are laws (albeit probably not strong enough) regarding the responsible serving of alcohol. Yet the pokies carry on as if nothing's wrong.</p> <p>Not only that, the money from them does not go to the government, it goes straight to the pokie barons who bought off the Tasmanian Hoteliers association, and then pay big money to skew the election results in this state. All of which should have been completely illegal. With better laws to protect this state the people involved would have been arrested!</p>
7054	Get rid of this disgusting & evil stealing from the less well off Tasmanians
7054	Pubs and clubs should be gathering places for people not noisy, light flashing spaces extracting money by manipulation.
7054	Fewer pokies more fun less misery
7054	<p>Let's build wealth pokies are unfair and destructive to people's lives.</p> <p>Let's spread wealth!</p>
7054	Expose the LNP for taking bribes from Federal Hotels and rigging the last election or are you to scared because you take bribes too.
7054	Pubs and clubs need to be pokies free.
7054	<p>There are so many reasons why society, especially families, would benefit from the banning of poker machines.</p> <p>The issue that affected my own family is the addiction that drives a person to squander their own money then steal, lie and cheat others out of money to fuel their addiction. It is debilitating to everyone concerned.</p> <p>Just stop enabling this illness.</p>
7054	I want a Tasmania where people are safe from the harms of pokies.
7054	The pokies hurt people and transfer their money into the hands of one wealthy family. It's time to stop the corruption!
7054	Our world is now different. Let's make a real difference. Thank you for this initiative.
7054	checking
7054	The harm done to families and children as of pokies in Tasmania has to stop.
7109	Keep them in the casino and out of pubs!!! I avoid anywhere with them. They destroy families. Get them out now!

7112	Pubs and clubs don't need pokies to survive. They need to reinvent themselves into music venues, family beer gardens, family dining with live music entertainment. So much more than gambling.
7113	It's time for regrowth. The only growth I'm interested is housing for homeless and disadvantaged. Some little tiny houses in accessible places should be the most important thing for helping the most disadvantaged at least get some basic human rights...
7113	Ban the pokies and give families their loved one and their income back where it belongs.....with the family.
7113	Empower our most vulnerable to be financially self-sustainable
7116	Gambling- we don't need it.
7140	These insidious machines are designed to entrap the vulnerable. If we can't get rid of them, tax them dry and spend the money back in the communities it came from, or reduce the amount in any one 'spin' to 10cents!
7150	We need money to keep circulating in our communities and economy to create jobs, not be sucked up by pokies and sent to the mainland.
7150	The powerful gambling lobby bought our last election and continue to feast on their immoral earnings. It's time to stand up to them to protect the vulnerable.
7150	Now is the time to focus on building a new economy - a circular economy- that minimises waste, strengthens our key industries like food/agriculture and keeps money circulating within the state creating jobs - this will contributing to a thriving community. Pokies are not compatible with this and lead to harm to local families and money leaving our state. In an economy which is fragile and with households under financial stress, pokies are more risky than ever.
7150	Poker machines devastate the most vulnerable families in our communities. We must not exploit these people for profit! Please remove pokies from pubs!
7170	I believe that money frittered away on pokies would be better donated to domestic violence shelters and organisations that support homeless citizens rather than lined the pockets of those who are already obscenely wealthy
7170	Let's keep this money in the community, not in the pokies!
7172	Is WA can do it so can Tasmania
7173	We have seen the good side, let's keep it that way. More money into the community not into ex Tasmanians pockets
7173	We have a fresh opportunity to wisely plan how we want to really live in this participatory democracy post pandemic. Let's not gamble it away anymore.
7184	Make real time public disclosure of political donations mandatory
7203	Stop them!
7215	It's obvious the people who gamble can least afford it so let's stop the monopoly with Federal Hotels and bring back live bands.
7215	Hopefully gamblers will see more money for food and essentials now.

7216	Too many families going without because of gambling addiction.. We need to reduce the pokies numbers now, and encourage further removal into the future.
7216	I think of less financial harm to families and more money available for the things that matter.
7216	If we must have pokies, keep them in casinos. Otherwise greatly reduce the numbers and the amount of maximum bet.
7248	Enough is enough. Gambling is as bad as smoking, and pokies are harming already vulnerable people.
7248	You're gambling with more than your change.
7248	Half the number of pokie machines and have bet limits imposed
7249	As we rebuild our community after COVID-19, the last thing Tasmania needs is a return to the same high levels of pokies harm. We can do much better than that.
7249	<p>My message is we do not need the pokies in clubs and pubs, people do not beat the odds on pokies, and the heartache for families is horrifying and the message that so much money goes out of this state and the</p> <p>Government should do more for the families. Like social distancing will help but the desperation in gambling addiction is heartbreaking. Advertising at the last state election and the money spent to help workers and gambling to continue was unwisely spent. Families suffer and individuals. They lose out by having to sell their assets and it can lead to stealing and more problems.</p>
7249	I saw a friend of a friend losing her husband and then slide into depression and then lost everything at CCC in Launceston ...sad no house no car living in a rental. This is but one story. There would be thousands of similar stories. Free bus rides to Hobart even. Devastating on families, also the victims.
7250	Pokies are unnecessary and cause a great deal of harm within our communities.
7250	Let's invest more in recycling and renewables
7250	Please be brave and ask do something which will make a real difference now and into the future for Tasmania.
7250	<p>Casinos, pubs and all venues should have less poker machines.</p> <p>Cut the number in Tas by half</p>
7250	We don't need pokies
7250	Pokies are places where they are certain to do the most harm. Now is not the time for profiting from exploiting our most vulnerable people.
7250	Taking pokies out of pubs would reduce the number of gambling addicts in Tasmania.
7250	Get pokies out of pubs & clubs!
7250	Pokies are killing the people of Tasmania please get them out so that people can live.
7250	Less pokies is better for families

7250	Tasmanians don't need pokies they need their time and money to support their family
7250	Pokies are a cancer on society. Pubs used to be places people would socialise in. Meet in. Dine in. Now they just suck the money out of addicts is a backside room.
7253	Commit to legislating evidence-based harm minimisation measures, like slower spin speeds, lower maximum bet limits, lower jackpots and shorter opening hours  AND monitor the time spent on pokies too
7254	Time to correct old dangerous ways, stop poker machines availability, remove from hotels completely. Only allow them in casino venues.
7258	Let's help Tasmanian families keep food on the table, reduce domestic violence and not allow one family to have such a financial monopoly on our economy
7275	If there must be pokies only have them in the casinos.  Whilst they are readily available to access in the community they will continue to gobble up millions of dollars that would be better spent in families and circulating in the local community not bolstering the coffers of Greg Ferrell and the clubs.
7277	Just get rid of them, too much harm just to enrich a minority of people, and they don't employ the people they claim either, they are Machines.
7277	Get rid of this cancer on society
7300	Get the poker machines out of pubs. Allocate any future licences via transparent tender process. Restrict maximum bets.
7301	I agree with Meg Webb on her opinion about poker machines in pubs and clubs, I think they should be band from pubs and clubs which would mean families would have money to spend on essential family items instead of all their money going to Federal Hotels, Western Australia doesn't need pokie machines so why do we. Too many children are going without so Federal Hotels can increase their profits, it's not right.
7304	Limit pokies to casinos, betting limits and time limits!
7304	Get the pokies out of pubs!
7304	Long overdue
7304	You wouldn't set up a bar with Ice in a pub, or heroin, and profit from the misery these addictions bring. Addiction destroys our communities - give people a chance and remove this one source of additive behaviour there is actually some control over.
7304	Pokies should only be in the casinos and NOT pubs and clubs, there should be limits on bets and machines. It should not be a monopoly by the Farrell Group
7306	Rip out the pokies, make space for live music!
7310	Pokies out of pubs and clubs!
7310	Put people before profits and revenue.
7310	Pokies and gambling are a hideous blight on the welfare and happiness of Tasmanian families. Remove and destroy them.

7310	The health of host animals improves once the parasites that infect them are removed. Apply that knowledge to our communities.
7310	It's obvious to my family how that during lockdown how much money was saved at home and how the quality of our life improved! Anonymous
7310	Encourage venues to offer proper entertainment such as music. We need more live music venues.
7310	Pokies can stay in casinos but should be removed from pubs and clubs
7310	Eric abetz drinks his own bathe water
7310	Rescue people from their damaging addiction
7310	I have never seen an instance of pokies helping society. I have personally only ever used them a few times (Not my thing) but have seen the damage they cause when people become addicted.
7310	We have a huge problem here with pokies in Tasmania. Affecting the rural townships and its people who can very least afford it. Much better that the money spent goes into the local economy in a healthier way. Pokies should only be in casinos, and even then spending limits put in place. Get them out of our local pubs and clubs now.
7310	Develop initiatives to encourage pubs and clubs to become pokies-free and be reborn as community-building social hubs
7315	It's in the question, less pokies harm.
7315	The pokies destroy families
7316	It smacks of corruption for one family to be able to take all the profits from these terrible machines. Ban them.
7316	Pokies are out of control and do absolutely nothing positive for society. I have seen the harm they do.
7320	Just need to stop these pokies...
7320	I have been a victim, of a person addicted to pokies. She now lives in poverty and is constantly fuelling her gambling habit with her pension. She doesn't eat quality food and has next to no furniture or belongings. She doesn't see the harm that has caused her family or herself because all she can think of is spending every last dime chasing the big one and using her system" to try and win. She lost her house and her family to this addiction. I would hate to see this happen to anyone else. Pubs and clubs need to be more family friendly. Live bands
7320	Get rid of them in pubs please, should be casino's only
7321	Focus on infrastructure, housing, health and tourism
7321	Ya can't win
7325	I lost my job because the owners were hooked on these.
7325	Bring back the old pub life and good times. Pokies destroyed it. Along with family's and lives.
7330	The game is rigged, don't play the game. Put your money where it will stay, in your local community run and owned businesses, supporting those that matter.
7331	The Pokies Prey on the Vulnerable and Rob Our Communities of \$\$\$ that Could be Better Spent in Other Areas Thus Boosting Local Economies

## Attachments

1. Department of Treasury and Finance advice submitted March 2017 to the Joint Parliamentary Inquiry into Future Gaming Markets: *"[What is] the estimated economic impact to State tax receipts if electronic gaming machines had a \$1 bet limit in the casinos and were removed from hotels and clubs?"*