



Andrew Wilkie MP
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Fifth Social and Economic Impact Study of Gambling in Tasmania
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Submission to the Fifth Social and Economic Impact Study of Gambling in Tasmania

Current harm minimisation measures continue to fail Tasmanians. Poker machine losses are fast approaching \$200m a year in our state, with some 40 per cent of these losses being suffered by people with an addiction to the machines. The industry continues to target low socio-economic areas such as Glenorchy where around \$2m a month is lost on poker machines. In addition to this, the recent social disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has increased stress on the Tasmanian community which will, no doubt, lead to an ongoing misuse of these machines.

Recently I proposed four measures as the basis for a Community Protection Plan which was designed with the aim of increasing protection for Tasmanians, while still allowing the recreational use of the machines.

The Plan would see maximin bets capped at \$1 in order to bring the cost of machine use closer to the cost of other recreational activities, such as dining out or going to the movies. In addition it calls for spin rates on all machines to be slowed. Currently it is possible to bet \$5 every 3.5 seconds on Tasmanian poker machines and this can easily result in the loss of around \$600 an hour.

The Plan also calls for the removal of addictive features which are currently programmed into the machines. These are features which have been identified as contributing to poker machine addiction by leading academics in both Australia and internationally. Amongst such features are losses disguised as wins, which is when the machine indicates visually and through sounds that a player has won a bet, when in fact they have lost money. A further example of addictive features is the fake near misses, which is where the symbols on the machines reels are programmed to create the misleading impression that a player came close to winning a bet when this was not the case.

The final part of the Plan calls for effective penalties for venues that fail to provide the legally required protections for machine users. One example relates to ensuring self-exclusion programs are effective. I note that the NSW Government has announced a planned overhaul of their self-exclusion protocols because existing protocols have been shown to be woefully ineffective. A similar situation exists in Tasmania. I recommend that the NSW reforms are closely monitored and quickly adopted if they prove to be successful in reducing harm to machine users.

It is my strong view that all of these player protections should be introduced before the Tasmanian government proceeds any further with its plan to change the way poker machine licenses are allocated in this state.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Andrew Willkie'.

Andrew Willkie MP
Independent Member for Denison