

# 2021 STATE ELECTION JOINT STATEMENT ON POKER MACHINES IN TASMANIA



## The Facts on Pokies:

- ❶ Poker machines are **designed to addict**.
- ❷ Poker machines are **disproportionately located in lower socio-economic areas**.
- ❸ Robust consumer **protections can minimise the harm poker machines cause**.

**Poker machines are designed to be addictive and are recognised as a potentially dangerous product.**<sup>1</sup>

Consumer protections around poker machines are weak and the harms they cause are significant. In Tasmania, poker machines in hotels and clubs are concentrated in lower socio-economic areas and it is these communities that suffer the most harm.<sup>2</sup>

Gambling harm is a public health issue because it impacts the health, finances, relationships and security of Tasmanians and their families. Harms related to gambling include relationship and family breakdown, alcohol and drug use, anxiety, depression, poor health outcomes, financial hardship, and crime. Beyond the person experiencing gambling problems, family members, friends, employers and colleagues can also be affected.<sup>3</sup>

*It is possible and easy to make poker machines safer. Tasmania's recovery from COVID-19 depends on our people and our communities being stronger and more resilient than ever. Now is the time to commit to minimising the harms caused by poker machines.*

The undersigned call on all candidates and parties to commit to making poker machines safer — and a genuinely recreational product — by introducing:

- ❶ \$1 bet limits.
- ❷ Slower spin speeds (six seconds).
- ❸ Prohibit 'losses disguised as wins.'
- ❹ Smaller jackpots.
- ❺ Higher return to player.
- ❻ Reduced opening hours for poker machine venues.
- ❼ Mandatory staff intervention when harm is occurring (as is the case with responsible service of alcohol).

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<sup>1</sup> Productivity Commission 2010, [Gambling](#), vol. 1, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra, no. 50, p. 4-24.

<sup>2</sup> Livingstone, C 2017, [Tasmania's pokie problem: stress and disadvantage exploited more than anywhere else in Australia](#), *The Conversation*, 1 March 2017.

<sup>3</sup> Department of Communities Tasmania 2019, [Gambling Support Program Strategic Framework 2019-2023](#).

## The Facts on Pokies:

- ❶ Tasmanians lose around \$500,000 to poker machines every day.
- ❷ Half of all losses come from people who are addicted or at-risk gamblers.
- ❸ At least 27,000 Tasmanians are addicted or at-risk gamblers.
- ❹ There are 3,526 poker machines in Tasmania.
- ❺ Currently, people can lose up to \$600 per hour.
- ❻ Cost to Tasmania of gambling harm is estimated to be \$100 million per year, 80% of which is caused by pokies.
- ❼ One in three Tasmanians personally know someone seriously harmed by pokies.
- ❽ Only one in ten people addicted to pokies seek help.

## Further reading:

- ❶ [ACIL Allen Consulting, Deakin University, Central Queensland University and The Social Research Centre Fourth Social and Economic Impact Study of Gambling in Tasmania \(2017\)](#)
- ❷ [Productivity Commission Inquiry Report on Gambling \(2010\)](#)
- ❸ [Parliament of Tasmania Joint Select Committee on Future Gaming Markets \(2017\)](#)
- ❹ [TasCOSS submissions on gambling](#)

