

2024 Tasmanian State Election Joint Statement on Poker Machines in Tasmania

The Facts on Poker Machines:

- **Poker machines are designed to addict.**
- **Poker machines are concentrated in low socio-economic areas.**
- **Four-in-five regular users of poker machines are at risk of harm.¹**
- **Robust consumer protections will reduce harm to Tasmanians.**

Poker machines account for most gambling-related harm in Tasmania and the number of Tasmanians being harmed is increasing.²

Gambling harm is a public health issue because it affects the health and wellbeing of Tasmanians and their families.

Harms related to gambling include relationship and family breakdown, financial hardship, alcohol and drug abuse, crime, anxiety, depression and suicide. Each person's gambling harms up to six other people and when people gamble more than they can afford, it affects all Tasmanians.

The evidence shows that the best consumer protections to prevent and reduce gambling-related harm include a universal, pre-commitment card and safer programming of poker machines. These measures will still allow recreational gambling.³

On the recommendation of the Tasmanian Liquor and Gaming Commission (TLGC), the Tasmanian Government committed to implementing a universal, pre-commitment card system with **four essential features:**⁴

- Binding pre-commitment with default loss limits.
- Applies to all people using poker machines.
- A single system across all venues.
- A single card per person.

A universal, pre-commitment card with these four essential features will prevent and reduce harm to Tasmanians.

¹ Greer, N et al. (2023), [Regular Pokies Gambling in Australia 2022: National Gambling Trends Study](#), Australian Gambling Research Centre, Melbourne.

² Anglicare Tasmania, Gamblers Help data 2023, reported in [The poker machine card. Simple as.](#)

³ Dr Charles Livingstone quoted in Australian Parliament, [Joint Select Committee on Gambling Reform](#); Wilkie, A (2011), [The Design and Implementation of a Mandatory Pre-Commitment System for Electronic Gaming Machines](#), Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra.

⁴ Tasmanian Liquor and Gaming Commission (2022), [Report to the Treasurer: Investigation of Harm Minimisation Technologies: Facial Recognition and Player Card Gaming.](#)

We, the undersigned, call on all parties and candidates to commit to making poker machines safer for all consumers by:

1. Completing the implementation of the universal, pre-commitment card with the four essential features as recommended by the TLGC.
2. Introducing safer machine design features, including:
 - \$1 bet limits;
 - Slower spin speeds (six seconds);
 - Prohibiting 'losses disguised as wins;'
 - Smaller jackpots;
 - Higher return to player; and
 - Reduced opening hours for poker machine venues.

The Current Reality:

- Tasmanians lose over **half a million dollars a day** in poker machines.
- In 2022/23, Tasmanians lost **\$189.6 million in poker machines**.
- **40% of poker machine revenue** is from people experiencing gambling harm.
- Up to **57,000 Tasmanians** are harmed by someone else's gambling.
- Tasmanians contacting **Gamblers Help increased by 33% in 2022/23**. Of Tasmanians contacting Gamblers Help, **four-in-five mainly use poker machines**.
- Poker machines are the form of gambling **most commonly linked to suicide**.⁵ People without a diagnosed gambling disorder **accounted for over 95% of gambling-related suicides**.

Joint statement signatories:

- Anglicare Tasmania
- Australian Education Union (AEU)
- CatholicCare Tasmania
- Community Legal Centres Tasmania
- Devonport Community House
- Engender Equality
- Health and Community Services Union (HACSU)
- Holyoake Tasmania
- Kristie Johnston MP, Independent Member for Clark
- Lifeline Tasmania
- Rev Jeff McKinnon, Baptist Pastor (*retired*)
- Mental Health Council of Tasmania (MHCT)
- Migrant Resource Centre Tasmania
- National Council of Women of Tasmania
- No Interest Loan Scheme (NILS) Tasmania
- Tasmanian Council of Social Service (TasCOSS)
- The Quaker Peace and Justice Committee Tasmania
- The Salvation Army Tasmania
- The Smith Family
- Unions Tasmania
- Uniting Vic.Tas.
- Women's Health Tasmania
- Youth, Family and Community Connection (YFCC)
- Youth Network of Tasmania (YNOT)

Further Reading:

- **Tasmanian Liquor and Gaming Commission:** [Report to the Treasurer: Investigation of Harm Minimisation Technologies: Facial Recognition and Player Card Gaming](#)
- **Anglicare Tasmania:** [The Poker Machine Card. Simple As.](#) and [What's the Real Cost](#)
- [Productivity Commission Inquiry Report \(Volume 1\): Gambling](#)

⁵ Rintoul, AC et al. (2023), [Gambling-related suicide in Victoria, Australia: A population-based cross-sectional study](#), The Lancet.