

**From:** Margie Law <M.Law@anglicare-tas.org.au>  
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**Attachments:** 20161209\_Community Voice on Pokies Reform Submission to Gambling Inquiry 2016.pdf; 20161209\_Community Voice on Pokies Reform\_Open letter Submission to Gambling Inquiry.pdf

Dear Secretary,

Please find attached two submissions on behalf of Community Voice on Pokies Reform for consideration by the Joint Select Committee on Future Gaming Markets.

Margie

**Margie Law**

Policy, Strategy and Development  
Social Action and Research Centre (SARC)

**Anglicare Tasmania Inc.**

159 Collins St, Hobart  
GPO Box 1620, Hobart 7001  
P: (03) 6213 3577 | Freecall 1800 243 232  
[m.law@anglicare-tas.org.au](mailto:m.law@anglicare-tas.org.au)  
[www.anglicare-tas.org.au](http://www.anglicare-tas.org.au)

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**COMMUNITY VOICE  
ON POKIES REFORM**

# **Submission to the Joint Select Committee on Future Gaming Markets**

Community Voice on Pokies Reform welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to this Parliamentary Inquiry. As well as this written submission on behalf of our coalition, some member organisations will also provide their own submissions and Community Voice has also submitted to the Inquiry an open letter that is addressed to the Premier and has been signed by 3000 members of the Tasmanian community. Community Voice on Pokies Reform and our member organisations would also welcome the opportunity to provide evidence in person.

The major recommendation this submission makes is for the removal of poker machines from hotels and clubs.

## **Introduction to Community Voice on Pokies Reform**

Community Voice on Pokies Reform formed in November 2015 in response to the public debate about the future of poker machines in Tasmania. Established with 15 member organisations, we now number 42 organisations including peak bodies, service organisations, community groups and local councils (see Appendix One for the complete list of members).

Our purpose is clear. We call on the Tasmanian Parliament to introduce the following measures in their consideration of licensing arrangements for gambling in Tasmania:

- Remove poker machines from hotels and clubs.
- Not increase the number of poker machines in the casinos and impose on the machines in the casinos a maximum \$1 bet limit and a system that requires people to set an enforceable limit on their losses. Further, for it to be mandatory for the licensee to intervene where customers may be experiencing harm from poker machines.
- Continuation of counselling and other support services for those harmed by gambling.
- Support hotels and clubs that currently have poker machines to transition their business model.

We reached these policy positions on the basis of the combined experience of our member organisations both providing a wide range of services to the Tasmanian community and conducting research into the causes of disadvantage, vulnerability and the impacts of poker machines. Accessibility of poker machines and high frequency of use are two key indicators that lead to harm (Productivity Commission 2010, p. 14.1). Restricting access to poker machines is a responsible public health measure, in keeping with the Government's focus on preventative health (Tasmanian Government 2016).

Our approach would see harm caused by gambling being treated as other public health issues, in which the prevention of harm across the whole population is prioritised while also providing

effective interventions for people who experience harm due to intensive daily or weekly use of machines.

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# 1. The impact of poker machines

Poker machines are deliberately designed to be addictive (Schull 2012). They are designed by gambling industry psychologists and computer programmers to use sounds, lights and 'free games' to trick people into thinking they can win (Schull 2012; Harrigan et al. 2014). One in six people who regularly use pokies will become addicted and one in three regular users are at "moderate risk" of being harmed (Productivity Commission 2010, p. 5.25). About 2,000 Tasmanians are hooked on poker machines and many more are at risk (ACIL Allen Consulting 2014, p. 74-75).

Poker machine addiction causes ill-health, family breakdown, financial stress, poverty, job loss and homelessness. People who are addicted to gambling experience psychological distress, with feelings of shame and despair, and are more likely than the general population to suffer depression and anxiety, to smoke, to abuse alcohol, to suffer other mental health issues and to consider suicide (Productivity Commission 1999, p. 7.1; Law 2005). The emotional and financial harm extends to families, including children, friends and workplaces; for every person directly harmed by poker machines there are likely to be 5 to 10 people in their lives affected (Productivity Commission 1999, p. 7.1). Poker machines in Tasmania take about \$200 million every year from individuals, with about a third of that coming from people who cannot control their gambling (Tasmanian Gaming Commission 2016; ACIL Allen Consulting 2014, vol. 2, p. 90).

The machines are designed to encourage fast intensive use, which induces a dissociative state known as 'the zone' (Productivity Commission 2010, p. 11.16). This offers temporary relief from stress and emotional problems. It also makes people unaware of the amount of money and time the machine has taken from them. It is common for people who are addicted to the machines to hold erroneous beliefs about randomness and the independence of chance events. Experts agree that poker machines tap into similar parts of the brain as drugs such as cocaine and it has been described as 'addiction without the drug' (Potenza et al. 2001).

It is for this reason that addiction to gambling has been included as a disorder in the latest Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (American Psychiatric Association 2013, p. 481). The diagnostic criteria used in the manual are similar to those used by Tasmania's social and economic impact studies. Community Voice on Pokies Reform expects this will result in changes to how services such as the courts view gambling-related crime (Law 2010; The Allen Consulting Group 2011, pp. 19, 20). It also means that we can now say that approximately 2,000 people in Tasmania have a severe gambling disorder with poker machines, with many thousands more having mild to moderate gambling disorders with the machines (ACIL Allen Consulting 2014, vol. 2, p. 74-75; APA 2013, p. 481).

People often report to our services that gambling offers a distraction from stress, demands and responsibilities and life problems. The capacity for gambling to narrow one's focus of attention and produce dissociative states accounts for why many individuals use gambling as a non-productive coping strategy to deal with problems, emotional distress and tension. Gambling is also a means of overcoming boredom.

These factors may explain why the gambling industry chooses to concentrate poker machines in areas of socio-economic disadvantage and why people who are harmed are more likely to be socially disadvantaged through unemployment, low income, disability or social isolation (ACIL Allen Consulting 2014, vol. 2, p. 92; Law 2005).

For these reasons, Community Voice on Pokies Reform believes that restricting poker machines to the casinos only is a responsible public health measure.



## 2. Our experience of poker machines

Our member organisations have a long history of providing a wide variety of services across the State. We care about people and their communities. We have offices, shop fronts or congregations in over 100 suburbs and towns and together we are in touch with tens of thousands of Tasmanians. We are especially concerned about the most disadvantaged people in our communities and about addressing the root causes of disadvantage.

Over the past twenty years we have also developed extensive experience in trying to alleviate the harm caused by poker machines. Our 42 organisations have come to the conclusion that removing poker machines from communities is the most effective way to prevent the harm caused by poker machines.

For example, our member Youth, Family and Community Connections (YFCC) has assisted young people for almost 40 years in the North West. Every day, YFCC encounters Tasmanians who struggle with day-to-day living expenses and suffer ill-health. With 23 poker machine venues between Wynyard and Latrobe where each poker machine can take hundreds of dollars an hour from local people and “earn” thousands of dollars more than the local average wage, YFCC joined Community Voice to say that poker machines cause too much harm in local communities.

The Country Women’s Association joined our coalition because their members are concerned that poker machines have been allowed in so many small and remote towns, where they have taken the place of what used to be community-focused facilities. Members of the CWA see the damage done as people lose themselves to the addictive machines and they see the harsh roll-on effect for families and local businesses. They are concerned that poker machines do not employ many people, they do not improve health and wellbeing and they do not connect people to their communities.

Our member councils, Brighton, City of Hobart, Glenorchy, Kingborough, Meander Valley and Southern Midlands are also concerned about the destructive effects of poker machines on their local communities, particularly in their impact on social inclusion. The work of councils to help their communities build capacity, strength and resilience is made difficult by the harm caused to hundreds of their constituents through addiction to poker machines. Local councils are also concerned about the millions of dollars a year leaving their local economies; about 70% of the money that is taken from individuals by the machines is taken out of the community by the company that owns the machines (Lawrence 2015).

Member organisations like addiction specialist Holyoake and the Australian Psychological Society (APS), the largest non-medical health professional organisation in Australia, provide insights about the addictive nature of poker machines. These organisations warn that the programmed random functioning of a poker machine tricks the human mind into looking for meaning and encourages irrational beliefs such as superstitions or that a win is ‘due’ after a series of losses. These organisations observe that people harmed by poker machines experience similar behaviours to those addicted to alcohol and drugs: they prioritise gambling over other parts of their lives, continue to gamble despite serious negative consequences and find it difficult to stop even when they desire to do so.

While anybody can develop a gambling addiction, another member of Community Voice, the Brain Injury Association of Tasmania, is concerned that their constituents are at particular risk as one of the impacts of a brain injury can be the inability to regulate behaviour. In terms of poker machines, which are easily accessible and designed to produce a dissociative state, this can pose a significant risk.

On 26th October this year, Maurice Blackburn Lawyers took Aristocrat, the Australian poker machine designer, and Crown Casino to the Federal Court to challenge design features of poker machines they allege are unlawful under consumer law (Alliance for Gambling Reform 2016). Community Voice member Community Legal Centres Tasmania is watching with interest to see whether the differing sizes of 'reels', the differing number of winning symbols and advertised percentage return to player contravene consumer law.

Like the APS, the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation represents a large body of professionals who work in the health system. Their thousands of members work on the frontlines in Tasmanian communities to improve the health of people who often struggle with intergenerational poverty and trauma. They are concerned about the impacts poker machines have, especially for people with existing chronic health conditions such as diabetes, arthritis or asthma. The ANMF is concerned that poker machines do not contribute to a healthy lifestyle and instead reduce the money available to individuals and their families for nutritious food, winter heating, sports and recreation and out-of-pocket medical and dental bills.

Within families, the effects of a gambling disorder can be severe. Families of people who are harmed by poker machines suffer from financial difficulties. As Relationships Australia knows only too well, relationship breakdown is common as a result of the loss of trust, grief, anger, shame, anxiety and lack of stability. There is also a strong link between gambling and family violence, with people harmed by gambling represented as both victims and perpetrators (Suomi et al. 2013). Further, regular use of poker machines can cause mental health problems, as our members Lifeline, Men's Resources Tasmania and the Mental Health Council of Tasmania observe.

Other member organisations, like SU Tasmania and Glenhaven Family Care, both of which have worked in their communities for over fifty years, and the more recently established Foster and Kinship Carers Association, are especially concerned for the children of people who use poker machines. These members know that children of people who are unable to control their gambling are more likely to:

- become addicted to gambling themselves (Dowling et al. 2010); and
- suffer depression and other mental health issues (Vitaro et al. 2008).

There is a clear tendency for the gambling industry to install poker machine in areas of high socio-economic disadvantage, where people are more likely to suffer unemployment, poor health and lack of social connection (The Allen Consulting Group 2011, vol. 2, p. 5). This focus on disadvantaged communities particularly concerns the hundreds of community houses, parishes and congregations of our members the Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania, Tasmanian Baptist Churches, Uniting Church in Tasmania and The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Tasmania. As an organisation that provides assistance to people from diverse linguistic or cultural backgrounds, the Migrant Resource Centre is another member organisation that sees what happens when what is touted as "entertainment" becomes an addiction: instead of "fitting in" with the so-called Australian culture of gambling, someone who uses a poker machine regularly will find themselves socially and financially isolated.

As well as the good work provided by all of the member organisations mentioned above, our members Anglicare, Baptcare, CatholicCare, Colony47, Hobart and Launceston City Missions, Launceston Benevolent Society, Mission Australia, The Salvation Army, St Vincent de Paul Society and UnitingCare Tasmania are well known for their provision of services to help Tasmania's most disadvantaged people. Indeed, the State Government relies on our services to assist people on low incomes. It therefore seems odd to us to have Government policy, on the one hand, prop up private businesses that unfairly take money from vulnerable people and, on the other hand, have Government policy that provides funding to service organisations to assist vulnerable people.

Two of our members, Anglicare and Relationships Australia, are funded by the State Government to specifically provide services to assist people with a gambling addiction, as well as provide community education about the issue. Unfortunately, it is well known that the vast majority of people harmed by gambling never seek help and of those who do seek help most people usually wait for a year or more (Productivity Commission 2010). This means there are thousands of Tasmanians struggling with their gambling addiction without professional help. It also means that by the time people reach out to our services for help, their addiction has already caused deep-rooted problems for them and their families and the level of help then required is intensive. This leads to concerns that the interventions available to us do not go far enough: while we welcome the option of self-exclusions, all too often we know our clients are able to get around the exclusion and continue gambling. It is the easy accessibility of poker machines that is of particular concern to the success of our interventions.

The peak bodies and networks Tasmanian Council of Social Services (TasCOSS), the National Council of Women Tasmania and the Youth Network of Tasmania joined our coalition of organisations to support the concern of their many members. For another member, A Fairer World, their concern about the damage caused by poker machines fits with their vision for Tasmanians to “learn, connect and act together for positive social change”.

Community Voice on Pokies Reform represents a huge workforce (both employed and voluntary) that is in touch with most vulnerable Tasmanians. We are confident that the majority of the Tasmanian community know that poker machines cause significant harm and want significant change in public policy on gambling.



### 3. The lived experience of poker machine addiction

In the debate on the rights of private business to make profits and what policies are appropriate for minimising harm, it is the people with lived experience of the harm caused by poker machines that have the most “skin in the game”. For this reason, our submission will now highlight a few stories from our staff, clients and research participants. All names have been changed.

#### Financial stress and gambling

Roy, a self-employed father of two, came to his first Gamblers Help session in tears. After business stress Roy gambled to try to get more money for the business. He used money he had set aside for other things. Roy eventually had to confess to his wife what had happened and why they were now in debt with no savings. He felt crushing shame about what he had done where once he was proud he was managing his own small business.

#### Gambling on special occasions with friends

Pat is an elderly lady who has been attending Gamblers Help counselling on and off for 10 years, primarily to renew, revoke or adjust a self-exclusion for herself. Over the years Pat has tried many ways to control her gambling. She used to love gambling but has lost a lot of money over the years, including a loan that she had taken out for home improvements but which she gambled with instead.

Pat occasionally goes to the pokies together with friends on special occasions but when they are there her friends say Pat becomes “like a different person”: she can’t stop gambling, doesn’t want to leave the venue and gets angry when her friends try to coax her away. Pat says she will limit her spending to the cash she takes in but then goes and withdraws much more money. She has argued with her friends about her behavior. Her friends say this is unusual as Pat is mild and well-mannered at other times.

#### Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and gambling

Ros had revoked her self-exclusion a year ago. However, she developed a habit of dropping her daughter at school and then going to the local gambling venue for an hour, having a coffee and playing a few pokies games. Over time she spent more and more money and was worried she was developing a problem again, so she decided to do a self-exclusion before it got any worse. The exclusion had worked for Ros previously, so she came to Gamblers Help to renew it. When she knew she could not go gambling she just got on and did other things and rarely felt the desire to gamble.

Ros has post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) from a previous workplace. She gets treatment for this from time to time and is currently having a period off work due to PTSD. When asked if she found the help and support she gets for PTSD sufficient, she said, “Yes, but you have to push for it. There’s not much available here.” Ros did not know she could use the Gamblers Help service to talk about these things.

The counsellor explained that sadness, boredom, PTSD, anxiety, etcetera can all increase the urge to gamble, so talking about them can be included in Gamblers Help counselling. The counsellor asked Ros to notice what she got from the hour at the venue – was it relaxation (she said she was

not relaxed there as she was berating herself for spending money) or socialising (she said the PTSD made her not want to be sociable so she did not talk much to people there) or a way of avoiding going straight home. The counsellor discussed with her other things she might do instead of going straight home after taking her daughter to school, including developing a new morning routine to replace the one that included pokies.

## Child of a gambler

The following is a story of a 25-year-old female frontline employee of a member organisation of Community Voice on Pokies Reform.

*My mother has been addicted to the poker machines for 18 years. It started off innocently enough. My mother went to the pub with one of her friends, who introduced her to the poker machines. She won money and was ecstatic. Mum did her best to budget, but being unable to work due to mental illness meant finances were a constant source of stress for the family. Her relationship broke down due to domestic violence and we moved from the country into the city, where gambling venues were much more accessible. Her hobby soon turned into a habit that she still struggles with today.*

*I remember the familiar pattern that soon governed our life. Coming home from school the day Mum got paid, she was smiling (which meant she had won) or she was panicked and in tears. When she won, she generally put it all back in the machines over the next few days and would sink into a depression. When she lost, she would become very depressed and I had to help her try and figure out how we would have enough to keep on top of the bills, which fell into arrears. We nearly lost our public housing unit; fortunately Mum was offered the alternative of an automated deduction as a condition of being able to keep the tenancy. Birthdays were often celebrated late because she didn't have the funds available.*

*Her addiction changed her personality. She started lying; about where she was going, where she had been and where her money went and as time went on, the lies became more elaborate. She would become irritable if she didn't have the money to gamble and would borrow money off people. She would beg us for her money (we would hold onto her money for her sometimes) because "twos were coming up" on the machine and she believed there were strategies to indicate a likely win. She went to various payday lenders and ended up being thousands of dollars in debt, which then increased her temptation to gamble to pay the debts off. She also took my money without my permission.*

*One time, Mum gambled all of her money and then went to stay with a friend so that she didn't have to face us, as she knew my sister would get very angry. It was awful living off dry Weetbix and water. She also had the RSPCA come to get our beloved dog, because she didn't have the money to feed him. She still feels guilty, wondering whether they put him down.*

*Her lack of insight into her addiction has been concerning. I found she would often give excuses as to why she would gamble: it was because of stress, loneliness, or because her friends gambled and so forth. I have time and time again told her she gambles because she has an addiction, but she still has trouble admitting she cannot control her gambling.*

*She would promise to change, but it never lasted. She would gamble and end up with no money for food or cigarettes and become suicidal. It put me and others in a difficult position: by coming to her aid we were technically 'enabling', but the alternative was unthinkable. We didn't want to lose her to suicide.*

*Mum has tried hard to fight her addiction. She attended gambling support groups, activity groups, counselling and the voluntary self-exclusion scheme, but she would apply to have the temporary ban lifted. When the ban was on, she wasn't gambling, but she was miserable and lifeless without the machines to look forward to. Before the machines, she was a happier person, but since the machines took over, nothing else made her happy the way it used to. She confided in me that she would even dream about the machines and winning. Her mind was one-track on the pokies and there was nothing we could do to stop it, although we tried.*

*I don't feel any anger towards my mother, only sadness for how it has affected both her and our family. My heart aches for my younger brother when I hear him say the pokies always come first, before the family.*

*In my time, I have witnessed relatives battle drug and alcohol addiction, nicotine addiction and sugar addiction. I have found gambling to be the worst in terms of financial loss because of how quickly the money goes.*

*My mother says she is living each day waiting to die and that she is looking forward to death. The day the machines took over her life it sucked not only her finances, but her soul. I fully support measures to prevent this from happening to other families.*

## 4. Community attitudes and aspirations: response to terms of reference (a)

The most recent polling publicly released echoes all previous polls on whether poker machines benefit communities: the vast majority of Tasmanians (consistently around 80%) believe the community has not benefited from having poker machines in hotels and clubs (Roy Morgan Research 2001; Anglicare Tasmania 2003; SACES 2008; EMRS 2009; Anglicare Tasmania 2015b). Further, one in three Tasmanians personally know someone who has experienced serious problems with gambling on poker machines (Anglicare Tasmania 2016) and four in five Tasmanians want poker machines reduced in number or removed entirely from local venues (50% removed entirely, 32% want the numbers reduced) (Anglicare Tasmania 2015b).

In 2016, Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania surveyed their members and found 67% of respondents thought gambling on poker machines was a problem in their community (see Neighbourhood House submission to this inquiry for more details). Less than 5% said they were not a problem. Only one respondent thought poker machines “don’t cause gambling addiction, addiction comes from people’s own choices”. In contrast, 95% of respondents believed poker machines are addictive and harmful. Only 16% thought poker machines are “a good way for people to have a bit of fun”.

There have not always been poker machines in our suburbs and towns. Despite clear community concerns at the time, the State Government permitted poker machines to be installed into Tasmania’s casinos in 1986 and into hotels and clubs in 1997. They have been a divisive issue ever since, with every survey of the community expressing dislike and disapproval of the machines.

It was concerning to Community Voice that two hotels have applied to get licenses to run more poker machines in the Glenorchy municipality. Glenorchy residents have responded in large numbers by writing to the Gaming Commission to oppose these licenses, further proof that community attitudes need to lead decision-making.

Community Voice on Pokies Reform believes there should be a pause on any new licenses while the Committee investigates its terms of reference. That we are finally getting a Community Interest Test is welcome but it is not enough. Every community should be given the opportunity to say whether they want poker machines. Community Voice on Pokies Reform calls on the Tasmanian Parliament to listen to local communities.

### **Recommendations**

1. Government policy should take community attitudes and aspirations about gambling seriously: every poll of the community has shown that Tasmanians do not like poker machines and want fewer of them in our communities.

## 5. The importance of evidence-based public policy: response to terms of reference (b)

The best quantitative research that has been undertaken in the Tasmanian context has been the social and economic impact studies (SEIS) commissioned by the State Government. Anglicare Tasmania's submission provides an analysis of past SEIS and rather than repeat their analysis, we commend their submission to the Committee.

However, in summary, these studies, and the four "extent and impact" studies that preceded them, consistently show that poker machines cause harm, that the cost of harm caused by poker machines in Tasmania ranges from \$31 million to \$153 million per annum (Allen Consulting Group 2011 vol. 1, p. 136)<sup>1</sup>, that despite the introduction of a number of harm minimisation measures the number of people experiencing harm has not decreased (ACIL Allen Consulting 2015, p. 74-75) and the community is not in favour of poker machines (Roy Morgan Research 2001; Anglicare Tasmania 2003; SACES 2008; EMRS 2009; Anglicare Tasmania 2015b). It is of concern to Community Voice that the Tasmanian Gaming Commission provided a response to these studies only once (TGC 2008) and that the measures introduced by Government to address harm fall well short of the strategies suggested by the Commission.

In spite of the concerns raised in the "extent and impact" and social and economic studies, the State Government signed a new gambling license in 2003 and introduced harm minimisation measures that, based on the level of expenditure remaining steady, have had negligible impact.

There have also been a number of Parliamentary inquiries, including the 2002 Legislative Council Select Committee inquiry into the impacts of poker machines, Public Accounts inquiries into the deed (2003) and Community Support Levy (2005) and the House of Assembly inquiry into the proposed \$1 bet limit (2012). Community Voice on Pokies Reform does not believe these inquiries have been thoroughly used to guide policy.

Community Voice on Pokies Reform urges the Committee to recommend that the findings of the Social and Economic Impact Studies be used to formulate gambling policy. We believe the best way to do this is for the Gaming Commission to provide a policy response to each SEIS, which should be tabled and discussed in Parliament. We believe that if these studies were to guide public policy, Parliament will be convinced that the removal of poker machines from local communities is the responsible public policy position to take.

### Recommendations

2. The findings of the Social and Economic Impact Studies should be used to formulate gambling policy: the Gaming Commission should be required to provide a policy response to each SEIS, which should be tabled and discussed in Parliament.

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<sup>1</sup> This compares to an estimated total per annum benefit from poker machines of \$81 million to \$107 million (SEIS 2011, vol. 1, p. 135)

## 6. Failure of State Government to protect the community: response to terms of reference (c) and (f)

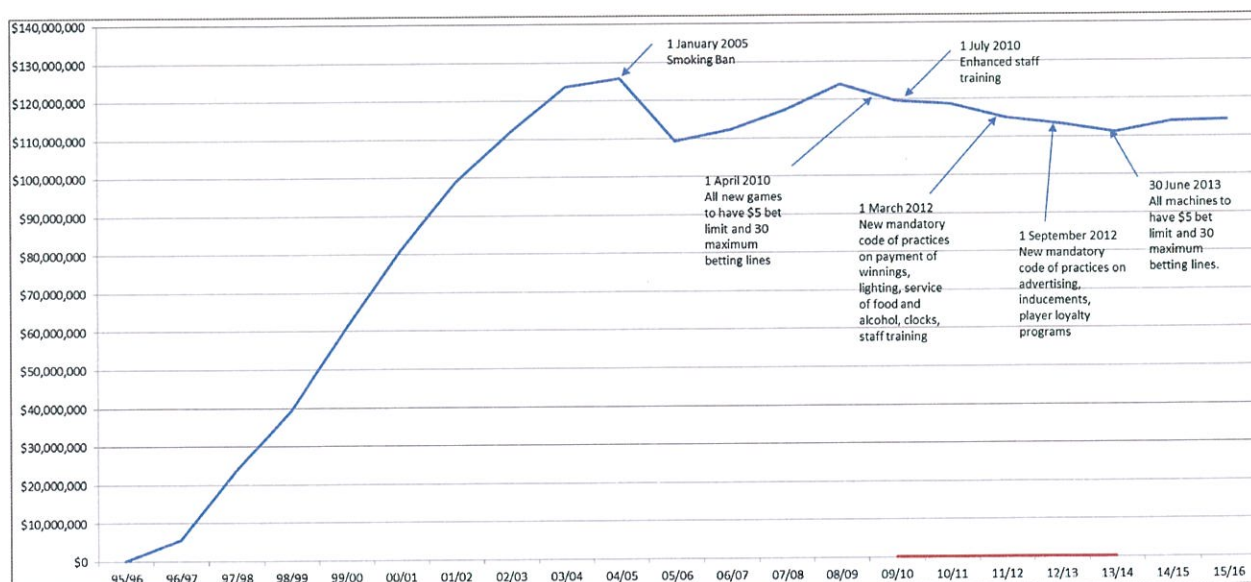
Community Voice on Pokies Reform believes the State Government has failed to protect the community from poker machines in three key areas:

- Widely accessible poker machines (locations and hours);
- Weak harm minimisation measures; and
- Messages that people can “Gamble responsibly” on poker machines.

Research tells us that the accessibility of poker machines is a key indicator of risk for developing an addiction to them (Productivity Commission 2010, p. 8.31). As a gambling research participant said, “I will send [my partner] to the supermarket which is 2 minutes away to get a couple of things and he will come back 45 minutes later and say there was a big queue but I will know where he has been...” (Law 2005, p. 44). The Productivity Commission estimated there would be an additional 10,500 people harmed by gambling in Western Australia if poker machines were permitted outside their casino (Productivity Commission 2010, p. 8.25).

The State Government’s ‘harm minimisation’ measures have not protected people from poker machines. The Government allows the machines to operate too fast, taking too much money too quickly. The Government’s measures such as venue smoking bans, \$5 bet limits, 30 maximum betting lines, ‘enhanced’ staff training and a mandatory ‘code of practice’ have had limited impact on reducing the harm caused, as evidenced by the steadiness in the amount of money taken from individuals by poker machines (TGC 2016). Poker machines are still taking the same amount of money from Tasmanians as they did ten years ago, as shown in the following graph.

**Graph 1: Expenditure on poker machines in hotels and clubs and introduction of harm minimisation measures**





The State Government has also failed the community with its use of the message 'gamble responsibly': people cannot gamble responsibly on a machine that is programmed to make them think they are winning when they are losing. Although the Government defines responsible gambling as "people understanding the nature of gambling and making informed decisions about participating in gambling" (TGC 2012) and while the industry does provide "responsible gambling" messages, the overriding message that people get in a poker machine venue is "state-of-the-art gaming machines in all their colourful rows spell one thing – excitement! ... progressive jackpots that run into tens of thousands of dollars ... [we] take care of our regular customers..." (Wrest Point Hobart 2014).

While the Gambling Support Program is to be congratulated for improving its messages in response to the 2010 Productivity Commission's findings that people misunderstand how commercial gambling works (for example with the Know your Odds campaign), there is still an overriding policy approach that people can gamble "responsibly" (for example with the State-sponsored Responsible Gambling Awareness Week and commentary in Parliament) (Department of Treasury and Finance 2016b; DHHS 2015).

## **Recommendations**

3. The State Government should protect consumers from a dangerous product: poker machines should be removed from local communities; consumer protection measures for the machines that remain in the two casinos should be strengthened; and Government messages should change from "gamble responsibly" to messages such as those used by the Know your Odds campaign (for example, "the longer you play, the more you lose").

## 7. Tenders, taxation and licensing: response to terms of reference (d) and (e)

Community Voice on Pokies Reform supports the calls from the Tasmanian community for significant change in future arrangements for gambling in Tasmania and urges for the removal of poker machines from our communities at the expiration of the current license. We suggest this could be done with arrangements for transition for the hotels and clubs that currently have machines, funded from Government gambling taxes. See the section 'Other matters' for more details about how a transition might occur.

With respect to the future arrangements for casino and keno operations, Community Voice asks the Government to consider community attitudes and aspirations as shown in numerous polls as well as Parliamentary debate over the years. Tasmanians have been concerned about monopoly licenses, financial returns to the State and the impact of gambling harm on our community.

Community Voice supports the proposed review of tax rates and license fees for Tasmania's casino gaming against the broader Australian market but believes a full debate on this matter can only be had if Treasury's advice about the value of the gambling license is made publicly available.

### **Recommendations**

4. The current license holder for the casinos and keno should not be automatically granted a new license;
5. The Gaming Commission should provide a report to Parliament on the costs and benefits the State has received from the existing casino and keno license;
6. The duration and terms of any future license for casinos and keno should allow the Government to respond to changes in markets, technology and community attitudes with no fear of penalties;
7. Any future license should not increase the number of poker machines in casinos and should impose on the machines in the casinos a maximum \$1 bet limit and a system that requires people to set an enforceable limit on their losses. It should be mandatory for the licensee to intervene where customers may be experiencing harm from poker machines; and
8. Treasury's advice to Government concerning the value of the gambling license should be made publicly available so that all stakeholders can contribute to this discussion.

## 8. Other matters: response to terms of reference (h)

### The economics of poker machines

Community Voice on Pokies Reform believes the economics of poker machines is a question of social values over insignificant economic benefits since the Tasmanian Government is not reliant on poker machine revenue (Baker 2015) and is unable to assure the public that poker machines provide net value to the community (The Allen Consulting Group 2011, vol. 1, p 136).

The value to the State from poker machines is negligible: tax collected from poker machines located outside of the casinos is just \$30 million a year, which is less than 1% of total State revenue (Baker 2015). In November 2015, the Tasmanian Treasurer said that policy will be guided by community views, not revenue considerations (Baker 2015). Further, almost \$2 million of the Government's annual income through the Community Support Levy is used to fund services and research to alleviate "problem gambling" as well as other health services (TGC 2016).

Like the Government, most small businesses do not benefit from poker machines being located in local communities. Of Tasmania's more than 30,000 small businesses, less than 100 have poker machines installed (Department of Treasury and Finance 2016a). However, when the Tasmanian Government offered the monopoly gambling license to Federal Hotels for free, the small businesses that installed poker machines were effectively provided with a subsidy: this special financial arrangement received by the gambling industry is not shared by other small businesses in the same local communities. Indeed, the majority of the \$100 million taken from Tasmanians annually by poker machines in hotels and clubs is money foregone from circulation through local businesses for entertainment, dining, services and goods, with just 6% remaining with the local poker machine venues (Lawrence 2015). About 70% of the money lost to poker machines flows out of our communities as profit for the company that owns the machines (Lawrence 2015). It is therefore not surprising that this company has increased its rankings in the Business Review Weekly's family rich list with an increase in wealth of \$50 million in 2014-15 (ABC 2015).

While the benefits to the owners of the machines are clear, we often hear about the benefits to the community through contributions the gambling industry makes from the operation of the machines. For example, half of the Community Support Levy, which is levied on the gross profits of poker machines in hotels and clubs, is given to charities and sports through grants programs. There is no doubt this money provides benefits to successful grant recipients. However, with annual disbursements of just over \$1 million each year to charitable organisations, the contribution made by the Community Support Levy is less than 1% of the estimated turnover of community organisations in Tasmania (TasCOSS 2016).

Community Voice on Pokies Reform also questions the benefits to employment claimed by the gambling industry. Research shows that removing poker machines will not affect employment overall: the Productivity Commission found that the impact of the gambling industry on employment is neutral because if the gambling industry did not exist or was smaller, money would be spent in other industries where employment would be created (Productivity Commission 2010, p. 6.1) and the social and economic impact studies found the total contribution of the gambling industry (all forms of gambling, not solely poker machines) to employment is less than 2% (ACIL Allen Consulting 2015, p 128). Victorian research also found that for every million dollars spent on

gambling, just over three jobs are created, compared to eight jobs per million spent on beverage sales and 20 jobs per million spent on restaurant and take-away meals (SACES 2005, p. 51).

Removing poker machines from local pubs and clubs is a decision that should be taken on public health grounds. While venues claim this would devastate their industry, the Government can offer assistance to affected venues. It is worth recalling that Tasmania banned smoking in hotels and clubs as a public health response, and fears that Tasmania's pub scene would collapse when the bans were introduced proved unfounded.

Community Voice on Pokies Reform believes Parliament can remove poker machines from hotels and clubs with minimal financial impact to the State when the costs borne by individuals are included in the economic analysis. We do, however, suggest businesses are assisted to transition their business model.

## **A transition plan for removing poker machines from hotels and clubs**

There are 94 pubs and clubs in Tasmania that have poker machines, excluding the casinos and the Spirit of Tasmania vessels. The maximum number of machines in any one venue is 30. Community Voice has calculated the average earnings per machine for each local government area and the annual gross profit for each venue (see Appendix Two). We found the annual venue profit ranges from \$18,000 (for example, for a venue in Dorset with 10 machines) to \$134,000 (for example, for a venue in Glenorchy with 30 machines).

While Community Voice on Pokies Reform believes that claims from the industry of job losses should poker machines be removed from hotels and clubs are overestimated, we support a fair transition process for venues that would no longer have poker machines past 2023 if the current licence was not renewed.

In developing a transition plan, the State Government should consider:

- that hotels and clubs can be a significant hub for local communities;
- employment created by activities that replace poker machines in a venue, such as food or entertainment, may alleviate loss of profit from poker machines;
- the opportunity cost of people who choose not to patronise venues that currently have poker machines; and
- the economic and social benefits of live music (UTAS 2015).

In recommending the State Government does not issue a new license for poker machines in hotels and clubs, Community Voice also calls for a transition plan to assist affected businesses. The Government could announce in its 2019 budget a transition fund. This allows the Government time to consider the Inquiry's report and gives the required four year notice as per the current Deed. This also allows the Government and industry ample time to plan their transition for the change.

For example, allowing access to \$1 million for each of the 94 premises would see the transition budget total \$23 million each year over the four years, well within the current income received by Government from poker machine taxes in hotels and clubs. The transition fund could be offered to affected venues to seek:

- financial and business modelling advice to identify alternative options for their venue; and
- funds to repurpose and refurbish spaces that currently house poker machines for new purposes.

After 2023, Community Voice estimates a net decrease in State Government gambling revenue of about \$20 million on current levels.<sup>2</sup>

### **Recommendations**

9. From 2019 to 2023, the State Government should provide finances for a transition plan for businesses that are required to remove poker machines.

## **The future of the Community Support Levy**

Currently the Community Support Levy is funded through 4% of the gross profit from poker machines in Tasmania's hotels and clubs, while the machines in the casinos and on the ships are exempt. Community Voice on Pokies Reform calls for this levy to be applied at the same rate to the gross profits from poker machines in the two casinos and the two Spirit of Tasmania ships. Based on Treasury figures, Community Voice on Pokies Reform calculates that the income derived would be approximately the same: at current expenditure levels on poker machines in the casinos, a 4% levy would reap \$3 million per annum (Anglicare Tasmania 2015a).

While it is expected the removal of poker machines from hotels and clubs would reduce harm caused to individuals, families and communities, the impacts of gambling problems will not reduce immediately. Counselling and other support services therefore remain a critical. There could be an argument for increasing the allocation of funding for direct counselling if the rate of people who are harmed and who seek help increased.

### **Recommendations**

10. The State Government should apply the Community Support Levy of 4% to poker machines in the casinos.
11. Counselling and other support services should continue to be funded at least at current levels.

## **Sports betting and online gambling**

The existence of Community Voice on Pokies Reform demonstrates that public concern is focused on poker machines. Sports betting and online gambling are currently minor forms of gambling with just 7% of Tasmanian adults gambling online (ACIL Allen Consulting 2014, vol. 2, p. 101). Tasmanian Government surveys show that most people who currently use a poker machine would not reallocate their money to other gambling if they were not able to access poker machines and instead they would spend their money on food, entertainment, family expenses etc. (The Allen Consulting Group 2011, p. 91). Community Voice welcomes the focus on poker machines but recommends that State and Federal governments need to closely monitor sports betting and online gambling for harm.

### **Recommendations**

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<sup>2</sup> This figure is based on estimations that the 15-year (with a rolling 5 years) license granted in 2003 was worth between \$100 million and \$200 million – this equates to between \$5 and \$10 million per annum. Given that the value of a license is likely to increase but that Community Voice proposes the license does not include machines in hotels and clubs, we estimate a new license could provide similar income. This income would be offset by the decrease in annual taxation and fees of approximately \$30 million a year that would no longer be collected from poker machines in hotels and clubs, the net difference being about \$20 million a year less than current arrangements.

12. The State Government should continue to monitor sports betting and online gambling and take appropriate action to protect consumers.



## 9. Conclusions

Poker machines are a dangerous product programmed to addict so the machines can take money from people who use them regularly. The Tasmanian Government legislated for poker machines to be introduced into our communities without seeking community opinion. Every study into the effects of poker machines in Tasmania shows a large social and economic harm and the majority of the community having an aversion to the machines.

There is clear evidence of harm and community support for their removal. With the license for poker machines and the casinos expiring in June 2018 (with the optional 5-year rolling term renewal) it is the right time for the Tasmanian Parliament to withdraw poker machines from hotels and clubs. As a community we choose to put restrictions on the availability of a range of dangerous products and activities. Locating poker machines only in casinos and adjusting the regulatory environment under which the machines operate is a reasonable restriction to apply to a dangerous product.

Community Voice represents collectively hundreds of staff from whom we draw expertise in the adverse effects of poker machines. Together we support thousands of Tasmania's most vulnerable individuals, largely funded through State and Federal Government grants. It is difficult for our organisations' staff and boards to reconcile the provision of funds from State Government for our work with vulnerable people with the support provided by the State Government for a product that is known to cause so much social isolation, misery and injustice. We welcome this inquiry and our members are available to provide further information in person.

### Summary of recommendations

1. Government policy should take community attitudes and aspirations about gambling seriously: every poll of the community has shown that Tasmanians do not like poker machines and want fewer of them in our communities.
2. The findings of the Social and Economic Impact Studies should be used to formulate gambling policy: the Gaming Commission should be required to provide a policy response to each SEIS, which should be tabled and discussed in Parliament.
3. The State Government should protect consumers from a dangerous product: poker machines should be removed from local communities; consumer protection measures for the machines that remain in the two casinos should be strengthened; and Government messages should change from "gamble responsibly" to messages such as those used by the Know your Odds campaign (for example, "the longer you play, the more you lose").
4. The current license holder for the casinos and keno should not be automatically granted a new license.
5. The Gaming Commission should provide a report to Parliament on the costs and benefits the State has received from the existing casino and keno license.
6. The duration and terms of any future license for casinos and keno should allow the Government to respond to changes in markets, technology and community attitudes with no fear of penalties.
7. Any future license should not increase the number of poker machines in casinos and should impose on the machines in the casinos a maximum \$1 bet limit and a system that requires people to set an enforceable limit on their losses. It should be mandatory for the licensee to intervene where customers may be experiencing harm from poker machines.
8. Treasury's advice to Government concerning the value of the gambling license should be made publicly available so that all stakeholders can contribute to this discussion.

9. From 2019 to 2023, the State Government should provide finances for a transition plan for businesses that are required to remove poker machines.
10. The State Government should apply the Community Support Levy of 4% to poker machines in the casinos.
11. Counselling and other support services should continue to be funded at least at current levels.
12. The State Government should continue to monitor sports betting and online gambling and take appropriate action to protect consumers.

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# Appendix One: Membership of Community Voice on Pokies Reform

- A Fairer World
- Anglicare
- Australian Association of Social Workers
- Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation Tasmanian Branch
- Australian Psychological Association Tasmania
- Baptcare
- Brain Injury Association of Tasmania
- Brighton Council
- CatholicCare
- City of Hobart
- Colony47
- Community Legal Centres of Tasmania
- The Country Women's Association in Tasmania
- Foster and Kinship Carers Association Tasmania
- Glenhaven Family Care
- Glenorchy City Council
- Hobart City Mission
- Holyoake
- Kingborough Council
- Launceston Benevolent Society
- Launceston City Mission
- Lifeline Tasmania
- Meander Valley Council
- Men's Resources Tasmania
- Mental Health Council of Tasmania
- Migrant Resource Centre
- Mission Australia
- National Council of Women Tasmania
- Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania
- Relationships Australia
- The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Tasmania
- The Salvation Army
- SU Tasmania
- The Smith Family
- Southern Midlands Council
- St. Vincent de Paul Society
- Tasmanian Baptist Churches
- TasCOSS
- UnitingCare Tasmania
- Uniting Church in Tasmania
- Youth, Family and Community Connections Devonport
- Youth Network of Tasmania



## Appendix Two: Estimated gross profit from poker machines from hotels and clubs

Venue name	LGA	Number of poker machines	6% of gross profit per machine by municipality	Estimated total gross profit for each venue
St Helens RSL & Ex-Servicemens	Break-O-Day	15	\$2,233.60	\$33,503.98
St Helens Bayside Inn	Break-O-Day	30	\$2,233.60	\$67,007.96
Derwent Tavern	Brighton	30	\$2,233.47	\$67,004.01
The Brighton Hotel Motel	Brighton	30	\$2,233.47	\$67,004.01
Comfort Inn Burnie	Burnie	20	\$4,021.19	\$80,423.77
Beach Hotel	Burnie	30	\$4,021.19	\$120,635.66
Regent Hotel	Burnie	30	\$4,021.19	\$120,635.66
Top Of The Town Hotel Motel	Burnie	30	\$4,021.19	\$120,635.66
Ulverstone RSL Club	Central Coast	20	\$3,099.15	\$61,983.03
Neptune Grand Hotel	Central Coast	25	\$3,099.15	\$77,478.79
Furners Hotel	Central Coast	30	\$3,099.15	\$92,974.55
Lighthouse Hotel	Central Coast	30	\$3,099.15	\$92,974.55
River Arms Hotel	Central Coast	30	\$3,099.15	\$92,974.55
Tall Timbers Hotel Motel	Circular Head	20	\$2,233.47	\$44,669.33
Bridge Hotel Motel	Circular Head	30	\$2,233.47	\$67,003.99
Beltana Hotel	Clarence	30	\$3,675.72	\$110,271.62
Foreshore Tavern	Clarence	30	\$3,675.72	\$110,271.62
Mornington Inn Hotel Motel	Clarence	30	\$3,675.72	\$110,271.62
Shoreline Motor Hotel	Clarence	30	\$3,675.72	\$110,271.62
Waterfront Hotel	Clarence	30	\$3,675.72	\$110,271.62
New Norfolk Hotel	Derwent Valley	24	\$2,233.47	\$53,603.22
Star & Garter Hotel	Derwent Valley	24	\$2,233.47	\$53,603.22
Devonport RSL Club	Devonport	20	\$3,155.83	\$63,116.69
Alexander Hotel	Devonport	30	\$3,155.83	\$94,675.04
Argosy Motor Inn	Devonport	30	\$3,155.83	\$94,675.04
Edgewater Hotel	Devonport	30	\$3,155.83	\$94,675.04
Elimatta Hotel	Devonport	30	\$3,155.83	\$94,675.04
Formby Hotel	Devonport	30	\$3,155.83	\$94,675.04
Molly Malones	Devonport	30	\$3,155.83	\$94,675.04
Quality Hotel Gateway	Devonport	30	\$3,155.83	\$94,675.04
Lords Hotel	Dorset	10	\$1,820.55	\$18,205.47
Bridport Hotel	Dorset	15	\$1,820.55	\$27,308.20
Kendalls Hotel Motel	Dorset	20	\$1,820.55	\$36,410.93
Gray's Hotel	George Town	25	\$2,003.92	\$50,098.06
Pier Hotel	George Town	30	\$2,003.92	\$60,117.68
Orford Blue Waters Hotel	Glamorgan/Spring Bay	15	\$2,233.47	\$33,502.01
Beachfront at Bicheno	Glamorgan/Spring Bay	20	\$2,233.47	\$44,669.35
Brooker Inn	Glenorchy	30	\$4,469.76	\$134,092.78
Carlyle Hotel	Glenorchy	30	\$4,469.76	\$134,092.78

Claremont Hotel Motel	Glenorchy	30	\$4,469.76	\$134,092.78
Club Hotel Glenorchy	Glenorchy	30	\$4,469.76	\$134,092.78
Cooleys Hotel	Glenorchy	30	\$4,469.76	\$134,092.78
Elwick Hotel	Glenorchy	30	\$4,469.76	\$134,092.78
Glenorchy RSLA Sub-Branch Club	Glenorchy	30	\$4,469.76	\$134,092.78
Granada Tavern	Glenorchy	30	\$4,469.76	\$134,092.78
Valern Hotel	Glenorchy	30	\$4,469.76	\$134,092.78
Marquis Of Hastings Hotel	Hobart	15	\$2,119.72	\$31,795.80
Waratah Hotel	Hobart	15	\$2,119.72	\$31,795.80
Welcome Stranger Hotel	Hobart	24	\$2,119.72	\$50,873.27
Queens Head Café Bar	Hobart	25	\$2,119.72	\$52,992.99
Black Buffalo Hotel	Hobart	30	\$2,119.72	\$63,591.59
Central Café Bar	Hobart	30	\$2,119.72	\$63,591.59
Hobart Mid City Hotel	Hobart	30	\$2,119.72	\$63,591.59
Dover RSL Club	Huon Valley	12	\$2,233.47	\$26,801.61
Grand Hotel	Huon Valley	25	\$2,233.47	\$55,836.69
Sheffield RSL/Citizen Club	Kentish	15	\$2,233.47	\$33,502.02
Parers King Island Hotel	King Island	15	\$2,233.47	\$33,502.02
Snug Tavern	Kingborough	20	\$2,161.64	\$43,232.74
Kingston Hotel	Kingborough	30	\$2,161.64	\$64,849.10
Shearwater Tavern	Latrobe	20	\$2,233.47	\$44,669.33
Mackeys Royal Hotel	Latrobe	30	\$2,233.47	\$67,003.99
Ravenswood Over 50 Club	Launceston	15	\$3,130.18	\$46,952.69
All Year Round Tavern	Launceston	20	\$3,130.18	\$62,603.59
Cock and Bull Hotel	Launceston	20	\$3,130.18	\$62,603.59
Sunnyhill Tavern	Launceston	20	\$3,130.18	\$62,603.59
Commercial Hotel	Launceston	21	\$3,130.18	\$65,733.77
Hotel Tasmania	Launceston	30	\$3,130.18	\$93,905.39
Kings Meadows Hotel	Launceston	30	\$3,130.18	\$93,905.39
Mowbray Hotel	Launceston	30	\$3,130.18	\$93,905.39
Newstead Hotel	Launceston	30	\$3,130.18	\$93,905.39
Park Tavern	Launceston	30	\$3,130.18	\$93,905.39
Plough Inn Bar Bistro Deck	Launceston	30	\$3,130.18	\$93,905.39
The Black Stallion Hotel	Launceston	30	\$3,130.18	\$93,905.39
TRC Hotel	Launceston	30	\$3,130.18	\$93,905.39
Westbury Hotel	Meander Valley	15	\$2,233.47	\$33,502.00
Deloraine Hotel	Meander Valley	20	\$2,233.47	\$44,669.34
Olde Tudor Motor Inn	Meander Valley	30	\$2,233.47	\$67,004.00
Doherty Campbell Town Hotel	Northern Midlands	20	\$2,233.47	\$44,669.34
Queens Arms Hotel	Northern Midlands	20	\$2,233.47	\$44,669.34
Queens Head Inn	Northern Midlands	20	\$2,233.47	\$44,669.34
Dunalley Hotel	Sorell	15	\$1,849.26	\$27,738.91
Dodges Ferry Café & Bar	Sorell	20	\$1,849.26	\$36,985.21
Midway Point Tavern	Sorell	25	\$1,849.26	\$46,231.52
Pembroke Hotel	Sorell	30	\$1,849.26	\$55,477.82
Hotel Federal	Waratah/Wynyard	30	\$3,625.07	\$108,752.10
Seabrook Hotel Motel	Waratah/Wynyard	30	\$3,625.07	\$108,752.10

Somerset Hotel	Waratah/Wynyard	30	\$3,625.07	\$108,752.10
Regatta Point Tavern	West Coast	10	\$2,000.91	\$20,009.06
The Top Pub	West Coast	10	\$2,000.91	\$20,009.06
Empire Hotel	West Coast	15	\$2,000.91	\$30,013.59
Heemskirk Hotel Motel	West Coast	20	\$2,000.91	\$40,018.12
Exeter Hotel	West Tamar	15	\$2,116.63	\$31,749.38
Beauty Point Waterfront Hotel	West Tamar	20	\$2,116.63	\$42,332.51
Riverside Hotel Motel	West Tamar	30	\$2,116.63	\$63,498.77
				<b>\$6,867,336.83</b>



# Submission to the Joint Select Committee on Future Gaming Markets: the Open Letter to the Premier

This submission is an additional submission from Community Voice on Pokies Reform specifically in response to part (a) of the Committee's Terms of Reference –

*“Consideration of community attitudes and aspirations relating to the gambling industry in Tasmania with particular focus on the location, number and type of poker machines in the State.”*

In late 2016, in order to assist the Committee and the Hodgman Government have as much information on the views and aspirations of the Tasmanian community regarding the future of poker machines, Community Voice on Pokies Reform circulated a letter outlining our position on gambling for members of the public to sign on to if they agreed. Community Voice on Pokies Reform now submits this letter, which is addressed to the Premier and is attached at the end of this document, along with comments made by signatories for consideration by the Committee.

As of the date of this submission, 3000 people had signed the open letter: 2614 Tasmanians from all areas of the State and a further 332 non-residents also signed, many of them identifying as ex-residents or having family and other connections to our state. Only Tasmanian residents are presented here.

In addition to signing the open letter, 602 Tasmanians took the opportunity to make a comment to further explain their support for the removal of poker machines from pubs and clubs. A selection of these comments is provided here, although the full list of comments can be provided if requested.

We believe the number of signatories and extraordinary comments show that poker machines are causing considerable and widespread harm in our communities; that Tasmanians understand this well and are deeply concerned and frustrated that they remain in their communities; and that the community views the number of people harmed personally or professionally by poker machine gambling addiction is unacceptable.

The submission of these thousands of Tasmanian voices demonstrates the strong desire for political leadership in Tasmania to get poker machines out of our pubs and clubs. We hope these voices are heard.

The full list of signatories and their comments is available on request.





## COMMUNITY VOICE ON POKIES REFORM

### Comments from Tasmanians personally harmed, or who know people harmed by poker machines

#### Summary

An incredible number of Tasmanians had the bravery to write of their own personal struggles with poker machine addiction or of what they have experienced through family and friends harmed by poker machines. The number of comments to this effect and the detail of the devastation deserve to be heard and honoured. These comments have been anonymised given the sensitive nature of the testimony.

#### The comments

"I am a gambler and if the pubs and clubs did not have the machines it would be much easier to give up. Remove all that are closest to shopping centres first." – Tasmanian woman, postcode 7018.

"Have seen too many people addicted to poker machines." – Tasmanian woman, postcode 7315.

"I have seen the damage done to our family and community and it is not worth anything in exchange." – Tasmanian man, postcode, 7159.

"I know first-hand the trauma wrought by the pokies. My husband drained our joint bank account before his death in September this year. I urge you to remove this scourge of our communities!!" – Tasmanian woman, postcode 7275.

"I have met people who have won lots and lost lots of money from gambling on the pokies; people who have subsequently suffered huge personal loss, despite a huge financial 'win'. I have never met anyone who has become happier from being addicted to gambling." – Tasmanian woman, postcode 7054.

"There are far too many of these machines in the pubs and clubs around Tasmania. They are really dark horrid places and I know of people who have become / or are addicted, and they'll sit at these machines pushing buttons all day long or until they have no more money left. So please Premier Will Hodgman could you cut back on the number of these thieving machines who cause so much heartache to the families of the addicted person." – Tasmanian woman, postcode 7249.

"My Mother has some dementia and lives in a unit in Glenorchy. All she wants to do is go to the Elwick Hotel and lash out on the machines. We cannot stop her as she is very determined to go there as much as possible. Her excuse is she needs something to do but she will not except help from veteran affairs. - Get rid of the machines as most people that go to these hotels the elderly seem to out number the younger people." – Tasmanian man, postcode 7011.



## COMMUNITY VOICE ON POKIES REFORM

"My mother took up playing the poker machines in her late 70s. The clubs were very happy to have her visits and her money. She possibly had early signs of dementia and for that reason her gambling was out of control. She lost a lot of money and did not seem to care. For the family members who had to watch this behaviour, it was terrifying." – Tasmanian woman, postcode 7252.

"I have personal experience of the harm poker machines can do." – Tasmanian man, postcode 7007.

"The last person in the world I would have predicted 10 years ago to be addicted to pokies and lost more money than I can bear to think about, is me!" – Tasmanian woman, postcode 7250.

"They nearly destroyed my life and I don't want it to happen to anyone else." – Tasmanian woman, postcode 7015.

"I am struggling with poker machine addiction and have never had an issue or interest in gambling before - they are insidiously referred to as gaming machines but they are predatory and the pro pokey factions are way too powerful and hold the floor by claiming most people play for entertainment - most people START playing for entertainment but cruelly get caught up in a trap of compulsion - psychologists have had a century of teasing and testing mice to design these blipping/blinking/alluring machines." – Tasmanian woman, postcode not listed.

"I have seen too many friends destroy their lives... Be a brave Government and ban them altogether in Tasmania." – Tasmanian man, postcode 7173.

"I have personally been affected by poker machine addiction and have seen what it has done to some wonderful people, reduced them to depressed, anxious shells of their former selves. The cost, not just financial, but to our social fabric is too great to continue the way we have been ignoring this incredibly serious issue. It affects the most vulnerable people who for many reasons do not have the capacity to resist the lure of the pokies. If you respect the people of Tasmania, you will take firm leadership on this issue." – Tasmanian woman, postcode 7009.

"Pokies are designed to addict people, take their money and leave them destitute and broken. I have personally seen the devastation that pokies have on people. Please get them out of our clubs and pubs. They have been a scourge on our society for too long. Every part of our society suffers from these things, sporting clubs, families, friends, businesses and even Governments. The revenue you raise from them is not worth the real cost to our society. We can do better than this Tasmania." – Tasmanian woman, postcode 7315.

"I regularly gamble and would be glad to see the end of them. Not there = no temptation!" – Tasmanian woman, postcode 7320.





## COMMUNITY VOICE ON POKIES REFORM

"I have witnessed many lives be destroyed by the availability of Poker machines in close proximity to their gambling addicted members. Keep them in the Casino's and have a very restricted number of them." – Tasmanian woman, postcode 7270.

"Though he has a PhD and a successful business, my husband was raised by a pokie addict. My father-in-law eventually began stealing to support his habit. My parents-in-law are now separated and their grandchildren now live with the effects of this addiction as well. It should never have been like this. But he was a victim of the grossly unjust poker machine system. Please don't let it happen to anyone else." – Tasmanian woman, postcode 7054.

"This issue has caused grief in our wider family and needs urgent attention. The advertising of gambling in television advertisements causes me grief each time one is aired. Please take action." – Tasmanian man, postcode, 7008.

"I have seen so many people get hooked on these machines my sister is & I also have an Auntie & my other relations I would not have a clue. Just get them out so at least we can go out for a meal without listening to them sounds going off that these machines make." – Tasmanian woman, postcode 7325.

"We need to take these out of pubs seen too many friends do it hard after losing every thing on these monsters" – Tasmanian woman, postcode 7320.

"My Mother, Father, Grandmother, Uncle and other family has spent enough in poker machines to build multiple houses. I hate these pointless contraptions." – Tasmanian man, postcode 7008.

"Dear Premier, Please remove the poker machines from the Pubs and clubs, we are familiar with older people who have got into serious financial difficulties because they live in hope of a win, and almost always lose." – Tasmanian woman, postcode 7015.

"I have no doubt that the easy availability of pokies has enormously multiplied the harm caused through multiplying the number of addicts. I am one myself" - Tasmanian woman, postcode 7050.

"After 20 years of problem gambling my sister committed suicide by overdosing on the prescription medication she had become addicted to. In the final 20 years of her life she was in and out of jail on fraud and other related charges - she was desperate to feed her habit. In the end she took responsibility for her part in this by taking her own life - the ultimate sacrifice after 2 decades of torment...Mr Hodgman, my sister took responsibility for what she done... Its time YOUR government took responsibility for the mechanism that put her in that position." – Tasmanian man, postcode 7320.

"I have seen people so broken by gambling addiction, I will be happy with anything that lessens their impact. Thank you." – Tasmanian woman, postcode 7005.



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"My wife had a diagnosed mental issue and secretly ran a debt through a financial institution in my name. She wasted almost \$10,000- . I am now divorced from her. The various vendors at different pubs & clubs were not interested in helping her and paid 'lip service' to 'responsible gambling'. I could no longer trust her. She said that she felt totally alone whilst being served drinks. No one bothered her. Someone should have! These machines and those that benefit financially,(not the punter), are largely responsible for my surrogate debt and the destruction of my marriage. Thanks guys for nothing!" - Tasmanian man, postcode 7253.

"My family has been personally traumatized by pokie addiction and I see the damage in my community. Please remove them from my local community." – Tasmanian woman, postcode 7317.

"I watch my father blow his age pension every fortnight on the pokies. I supply the food and cook his every meal so I know he at least eats every day. He can't afford to fuel his car up, struggles to pay his car registration. A brother pays his vehicle insurance, another brother pays his house & contents insurance. Pokies are a trap and need to be limited or removed from a lot of areas. What's more important- making a quid or people (especially the elderly) being able to live a happy, affordable life???? Open your eyes and see what is happening in communities!!" – Tasmanian woman, postcode 7467.

"I am a recovering gambling addict. I haven't gambled for around 7 years now, but when I suffer cravings (yes, just like substance addicts) it can be really difficult because pokies are EVERYWHERE. I can't easily avoid venues. I drive past 2 on my way to and from work. In that 7 years I have not lapsed. But I have come close. I have good coping skills and knowledge - I work in the AOD sector. And I still became an addict and struggled. Please put these machines where they belong and out of the too-easy reach they are when at your local eating and drinking hole." – Tasmanian woman, postcode, 7325.





## COMMUNITY VOICE ON POKIES REFORM

### Comments from Tasmanians who deal with the impact of poker machines through their professions

#### Summary

Echoing the personal testimony given by so many Tasmanians, many professionals in our community who deal firsthand with the effect of poker machine addiction wrote about their experiences. Their statements show the breadth and depth of harm done throughout the Tasmanian community by poker machines and how many professional people come in contact with it – from GPs and mental health experts to youth workers, people working in our prisons, those helping the most vulnerable in our community, real estate agents, employment agency staff, priests and other counsellors, community sector workers - and those who work in our pubs and clubs and the gambling industry itself.

#### The comments

"I work with vulnerable and disadvantaged people and I know the pressures they live with daily. The "hope" a pokie machine offers is cruel and illusory." – Jan Bindoff, 7015.

"As a Coordinator of the Rosebery Community House I see first hand the damage poker machines do to families. We need to remove them from our communities." – Bronwyn Chandler, 7470.

"I work in youth mental health and quite often listen to the sad lived experience of the children of adult parents with a severe gambling addiction to poker machines. Leaving them without food and warm clothes. Profoundly impacting on a young person's mental health." – Lyndel Dean, 7022.

"I have worked in pubs in the past and seen the destruction pokies can do to families." – David Figg, 7012.

"As a community support worker I have observed the consequences of those that become addicted to the "pokies" and the destruction this causes to families, in particular relationship breakdowns, trauma, mental health and the impact on children who lives with, or has lost a parent through addiction. These pubs and clubs target the most vulnerable people in our community. The costs to the community at large in terms of supporting with community services, i.e. material aid, family/relationship breakdowns, DV and mental emotional health supports is ever increasing. The Government has a responsibility to take action." – Josephine Flynn, Salvation Army, 7002.

"As a GP, I see many people who cannot afford the basics - food, clothing, shelter - due to losses on poker machines. They are a totally unnecessary evil. Time to go!" – Annette Hackett, 7112.



## COMMUNITY VOICE ON POKIES REFORM

"About time we put a end to this. I have worked in the industry for the past ten years and see pensioners in there not spending any money on food but instead putting it all into the machines they would be there from open to close and it is really sad." – Michael Jeffrey, 7320.

"I worked for almost 7 years in an Emergency Relief Office, I have seen the damage that gambling can do and in particular Poker Machines, I have provided food and food vouchers to families affected just to ensure that their children are fed. Please act on this problem to ensure that our children have a better chance in life." – Joanna Kelly, 7010.

"I am a teacher and see the harm caused by money spent on gambling. Let's create a Tasmania we are proud of and legislate for what is in the best interests of the people & not have a gambling revenue stream that is actually costing us money in the long run. We need to see significant change in our poorer communities if we have any future as a state." – Roger Omeagher, 7000.

"As a volunteer with St Vincent de Paul Society I see the problems created for families with a member who is addicted to pokies. Please lessen the harm they cause. Thank you." – Anne Piper, 7250.

"As a GP I have seen the devastating effects of this form of addiction, you should do everything you can to reduce the impact of gambling." – Clare Roberts, 7004.

"I would love to see less access to Poker Machines in Tasmania, I have seen people living on the streets in Burnie as a result of gambling addiction, it's too easy to access and is not effectively managed in Tasmania." – Belinda Smith (Salvation Army), 7320.

"I see the results of pokie addiction in the prison. Please take action to get pokies out of the pubs and clubs now." – Wendy Stothers, 7000.

"As a psychologist I have seen a number of people devastated by gambling. Pokies destroy lives." – Susan Todd, 7015.

"I am a retired psychiatrist, and have seen the damage that poker machines do. They are most prevalent in the lowest income suburbs, which makes them all the more dangerous." – Alex Bell, 7250.

"I have previously worked with people with addictions and addicts would tell me that gambling was the hardest addiction to free themselves from. When I worked on the Central Coast of NSW the highest rate of suicides was from gamblers which had taken over from youth suicides. Something needs to be done with this problem and is revenue worth the break up of marriages, losing everything and ultimately suicide." – Elaine Wragg, 7315.

"I am one of many people who professionally deal with the consequences of gambling addiction. Pokies are so accessible and sadly affect those in our society who already have financial problems. I hope you seriously consider this petition." – Philip Thomson, 7005.





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"In my work as a mental health social worker I have watched helplessly for many years as clients have become caught up in the trap of poker machine addiction, hanging onto the dream that the next time will be the big win, but it never is. The only thing that changes is their wellbeing, their relationships and financial circumstances and always in a negative and destructive direction." – Tracey Withers, 7004.

"Poker machines in pubs and clubs are a curse, esp. for our seniors. But also for many women. I am a pastoral care worker and have personally seen the devastation it creates in their lives and how difficult it is for them to stop. Get those evil machines out of pubs and clubs." – Hendrika Straatsma, 7018.

"As a real estate agent I have witnessed first hand the loss of an addicted gamblers home, marriage and sometimes life so it is time to rid ourselves of this curse out of our community--- poker machines must go." – Philip Shearing, 7250.

"As a psychologist I have seen clients struggle to 'beat' their addiction to poker machines and other forms of gambling. As a member of the community, I have witnessed friends going through this. One person's problem with gambling has a ripple effect to his or her friends, family and wider community. I don't believe poker machines serve a useful purpose for the majority of individuals and no healthy function at all for society as a whole. Please, Premier Hodgman, use this opportunity to reflect on your values and to consider your response if your child was struggling with this issue. We're all susceptible to the pull of pokies. Thank you. Best wishes," – Sara Robinson, 7005.

"I am a volunteer visiting Risdon prison & see some of the sad effects this scourge has in our Tasmanian community. Please seek to remove at least this temptation from the vulnerable. Thank you." – Patricia McCormack, 7170.

"Thank you for considering this important issue. As an Anglican church leader in our beautiful capital of Hobart, I regularly see the effects of addiction; please act for the emotional, mental, and spiritual good of our community." – Rev. Bob Imberger, 7005.

"As the former social planning officer for Glenorchy City Council I witnessed first hand the financial, personal and community cost of poker machines in our LGA. It is time to take action to get poker machines out of community venues and keep them in an environment that is regulated and safe. We also need to look at offering support to those affected by gambling - not only the addict, but their family and those close to them. The community grant program and gambling support services need to be focused on those local community areas with the greatest need and DHHS staff have their scope and capacity to work with local communities on prevention, early intervention and more intense/ innovative intervention programs widened." – Renate Hughes, 7010.

"I work in employment services with some of the most vulnerable people. I have seen first hand and listened to the stories of many whose lives have been crushed by easy access to poker machines. Please take some action" – Deb Hergatt, 7322.



## COMMUNITY VOICE ON POKIES REFORM

"Dear Premier Will Hodgman, in East Devonport 60 poker machines at 2 venues siphon over \$3.1 million dollars out of the local community; each poker machine taking \$52,597 annually in revenue. East Devonport has a SEIFA index of 803 with a disproportionate amount of low income earners in public housing (355 owned by Housing Choices, and additional Housing Department properties). Of approximately 2550 residents of legal gambling age about 1800 have no qualifications, and unemployment is high (e.g.: 22% for youths). The propensity to seek instant financial gratification from an instant win continues to be a substantial problem within the community during these hard economic times. The needs of community members in crisis have increased with families, youths, senior citizens and other residents struggling to feed themselves or pay living expenses which has been exacerbated by the habitual expenditure on poker machines. Because of the fore-mentioned reasons, it is strongly recommended the State Parliament remove poker machines from Tasmanian communities. Thank you." - Tracy Carter, Coordinator, East Devonport Community House, 7310.





### Comments about the impact of poker machines on community amenity and alternative aspirations

#### Summary

Tasmanians consistently state that they see no value to their communities from poker machines, and are clear that they remove money from other local businesses and do not benefit local economies. Further, they are clear that poker machines ruin social entertainment options and are not in keeping with the aspirations they have for their neighbourhoods and the State.

#### The comments

"Let's return our pubs and clubs to places of community, where people meet, talk, eat and listen to music, not sit alone in the dark and gamble." – Melanie Archer, 7170.

"Poker machines please remove them from the hotels. Hotels are a place where families can go for dinner together. By spending quality time together this brings the families closer. With machines present people sneak off and play them leaving the young kids to fend for themselves." – Gary French, 7019.

"Pokies are the ruin of my society in Glenorchy." – Beth Muller, 7010.

"They should have never been in pubs only clubs should have had them a little story a lady went up to the bar tender at the local pub and she said could u lend me some money to buy some cat food as I have put all my money in the poker machines very sad" – Nancy Stevens, 7011.

"Bring back live music, social activities, community atmosphere and life to our suburban hotels. Pokies are a life destroying and antisocial evil!" – Jackie Anfandis, 7250.

"People who don't have much become addicted to these things. Heard too many sad stories. Get rid of them!" – Mary Ann Barwick, 7018.

"Gambling, especially on poker machines, causes great personal distress and distorts our economy. Poker machine operators say that they are just providing enjoyment that people want. I have never seen people enjoying themselves at poker machines. They are, almost uniformly, lonely and unhappy at the machines. Please act to remove this social scourge from Tasmania." – Alan Bawden, 7250.

"I believe there would be significant economic benefits - as well as social and familial benefits - when poker machines are removed from our local communities. I have seen the treacherous impacts of these machines in my family and friends, my work place and the community." – Les Whittle, 7140.

"The community and small businesses will benefit from the closure of pokie venues. This will create jobs and be win-win for the community." – Kylie Waters, 7310.



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"Return all machines to the casino's and leave the hotels to develop family friendly atmospheres" – Leanne Towns, 7250.

"Hi, please remove poker machines from Tasmanian pubs, clubs and sporting associations. They provide no benefit to the community and work only to erode social connections within the community. Regards" – David Timmins, 7002.

"Killed the pub atmosphere killed socialisation sucks money on pension day" – Anke Skrandies, 7264.

"Money spent on the pokies deprives local businesses of sales and creates a lifetime of misery for those relatives of people addicted" – Estelle Ross, 7250.

"Quite apart from the huge issues it causes within families affected, we have many depressed communities and all the money that is spent on pokies would make a big difference if spent in local shops. Continuing to allow poker machines in pubs makes absolutely no sense, unless the government prioritises the income it gets from them over the welfare of the community." – Rachel Roberts, 7310.

"Poker machines diminish this community. Many people default to this activity to fill in time caused by lack of anything else to do. Upper Burnie is full of people glued to their machines watching their money go. They are very old and sad people. They look like zombies after hours playing the pokies. They are not people with enough money for this." – Jean Morris, 7320.

"They do not add to our society, they are at best an expensive bit of fun which most of us cannot afford. They should only be in Casinos." – Kathryn McCarthy, 7320.

"Please get pokies out of Tasmania as they're ruining personal and family lives with debts and time away from families." – Gek Low, 7008.

"Please create more community centres so people can enjoy social life rather other pokie games." – Rick7 Lei, 7005.

"Gambling addiction is an appallingly exploitative way to fund the state. Pokies are the worst as they appeal to the lowest common denominator, substituting for human community connection." – Anna Williams, 7004.

"Tasmania's pub music scene will be recreated!!" – Anni Archer, 7011.





## COMMUNITY VOICE ON POKIES REFORM

### General comments

#### Summary

Tasmanians clearly understand that poker machines cause harm, and are deliberately situated in our most disadvantaged communities. They think this is profoundly wrong, harmful and unfair. They strongly object to the state government relying on revenue raised from poker machines because they understand they are rigged to win, addictive, and prey on the vulnerable in our society. There is a real hunger for political leadership expressed in these comments.

#### Some of the comments

"For far too many years I have witnessed the more than detrimental effect has on so many families and so many times the children went without food every pension day because of the poker machines that are all rigged. Enough is enough, no longer can our government turn a blind eye to this heart wrenching soul destroying issue. As a member of the Liberal Party I am so passionate about this issue like all other addictions that destroy peoples lives. I am available at any time be contacted on this major issue." - Peter James, 7050.

"It is so well known that poker machines cause issues that are wide reaching. They are so damaging to our community, and our families. Please act." - Ruth Amos, 7050.

"There's only winner in this game - and that's Federal." - Philippa Atkinson, 7005.

"These machines serve only to enrich Federal Hotels. Any other explanation is subservient to this." - Steve Barker, 7010.

"It is especially appalling that poker machines are especially targeted at poorer communities, the ones who can least afford to lose their money!" - Bob Beattie, 7052.

"Tasmanian's are ahead of their time in so many areas, please don't doubt that a moral decision to reduce (if not eliminate) pokies is a courageous decision for the future and one you will be applauded for in the future. Please be the one to make the decision now, Mr Premier." - Kate Beer, 7310.

"Please show some leadership." - Robert Bennett, 7005.

"It is proven that poker machines bring misery to many individuals and families. Any government which allows this to continue is heartless. Please get rid of poker machines." - Janine Bevan, 7163.

"Thanks Will, removal of these addictive gambling machines from pubs and clubs, will save many families from financial heartache." - Bryan Bissett, 7315.

"There are too many people in our State who are addicted to poker machines and gambling. There are too many people suffering with family breakups, poverty and homelessness through this addiction. I ask the Government to move on this issue and



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remove the source of these problems. It is grievous to me for the government to rely on the proceeds of gambling and poker machines to run our beautiful State.” – Mary Wright, 7052.

“It's simple - the state government has no moral justification for profiting from the destruction of people's lives.” – Ann Wessing, 7150.

“Poker machines are a systematic way of extracting money from people who happen to be sensitive to addiction. Unfair, unjust.” – Melinda Waters, 7007.

“Poker machines are a blight on the community. WA pubs and clubs manage to survive without them so please get them out of ours?” – Peter Thompson, 7184.

“Have the courage to make a stand for the greater good.” – Brett Templar, 7250.

“Budgets that are balanced against community welfare are better than budgets that support community and family dysfunction.” – Gabrielle Street, 7011.

“This subject should be most urgent to a caring society. It is not right to take advantage of the weak and vulnerable of our community.” – Janet Stewart, 7250.

“What a historic opportunity - thank you so much Mr Hodgman for accepting this letter and considering this chance to change the families of Tasmania for generations - what a legacy! It will come at a cost - but great things do come at great cost and as a leader that is why we sit in that chair. Respectfully.” – Matt Sharples, 7021.

“I can only reiterate what has been emphasised in the above letter. What a fantastic opportunity to change the situation we have here in regard to the saturation of entertainment venues with poker machines. It will require a lot of courage and foresight to stand up and say no, but the benefits for our community socially and financially will be amazing. Please, please stand tall on this issue. With kind regards,” Jane Scott, 7008.

“There are better ways to raise revenue, without destroying people's lives” – Shana Rudov-Clark, 7005.

“So much money is drained from Tasmanian communities by this parasitic industry.” – Christine Wilson, 7008.

“Banning Pokies makes good financial sense. The cost to government of supporting families devastated by gambling addiction may not seem obvious, but it would be much greater than the income derived from pokies.” – Julian Robertson, 7008.

“Please take heed from the people” – Sandra Pennicott, 7030.

“The poker machine industry knowingly thrives on its addicts, weaker and more vulnerable people. So to derive a tax from this industry is to target the addicts. Government has a responsibility to protect its people. You can start by getting poker machines out of Tasmania's pubs and clubs.” – Sally McGushin, 7008.





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"Please listen to people who have seen too many people damaged by their addiction to gambling. It's usually the battlers and the poor who suffer the most as they cannot afford to lose even a small amount of money without somebody in the family suffering as a result." - Frank Lee, 7305.

"Please be the Premier who'll be remembered for doing something truly good for his state." - Nicole Lazaroff, 7109.

"Dear Premier, you have stated that your government wants us to be the healthiest state in the country. By acting to remove poker machines you can do a great deal to help promote individual and community health - money lost in poker machines, most of it from lower income communities and from people with gambling problems, reduces money and available for everyday living, for food, community activities, school and sporting activities as well as contributing to individual and family distress and mental ill health. Please take a real leadership role!" - Ann Hughes, 7000.

"If Western Australia can do it - we can too." - Clarissa Adriel, 7000.

"Easy money from those who can least afford it! Please stop this." - Cornelis Wegnam, 7004.

"Pokies are lose-lose. Pokies ruin lives. We'll all be better off if they are removed from our communities. The government should not be accepting revenue from such rigged and addictive trickery. Please take this opportunity to make a positive mark on history and get the pokies out of our pubs and clubs." - Jane Wasley, 7004.

"Dear Mr. Hodgman, this is a good example of what the media has highlighted in the last few days - that politicians need to listen to the ordinary people. In this case, vulnerable people are being exploited by too much exposure to unfair gambling opportunities in poker machines." - Basil Tkaczuk, 7250.



## Attachment

### Open Letter to Premier Hodgman on Poker Machines

Dear Premier,

You have an historic opportunity. Yours can be the first state government to take poker machines out of our communities.

Poker machines are deliberately designed to addict and rigged to win. Poker machine addiction costs too many Tasmanians their health, relationships, job or home.

About a third of government revenue from gambling is coming from the pockets of people addicted to poker machines.

The costs for the community far outweigh the money collected by your government.

One in three Tasmanians knows someone seriously affected by gambling on poker machines. Four out of five Tasmanians want poker machines reduced or totally removed from pubs and clubs.

We call on you to:

- Get poker machines out of Tasmania's pubs and clubs.
- Not increase poker machine numbers in the casinos, and make them safe and fair.
- Continue counselling and other support services for those harmed by poker machines.
- Support pubs and clubs with poker machines to transition their business model.

By withdrawing poker machines from our pubs and clubs, you can show that your government will not use the misery and addiction of Tasmanians as a source of revenue.

We urge you to take this step.