

# Briefing Paper: Promised Pokies Player Card vs New Government Measures

Office of Meg Webb MLC | March 2025

This Briefing Paper presents a comparative analysis of the government-commissioned Deloitte Access Economics report, *Social and Economic Impact of Electronic Gaming Machine (EGM) Reform use in Tasmania*, dated December 2025, and the Liberal government's alternative and more industry-friendly measures announced in January 2026.

## Summary of Current Situation

- A nation-leading **pokies player card** with loss limits was being developed by the Tasmanian Liquor and Gaming Commission (TLGC), as Liberal government policy under Michael Ferguson MP as Treasurer.
- The **pokies industry was strongly opposed to the card** and brought influence to bear on the government. A **Deloitte Access Economics report** was commissioned by Department of State Growth on the economic and social impact of the planned card.
- Before the final version of the Deloitte report was received, the **government announced it was pausing development of the player card indefinitely**, until a national approach was taken.
- On 23 January 2026, Treasurer Eric Abetz **announced a suite of new poker machine 'harm minimisation' measures**.
- The new measures announced by Government were **not advised by the TLGC**, are **not backed by evidence** as reducing or preventing harm, were **not consulted on publicly**, and have **not been assessed for their economic and social impact**.

- Also on the 23 January 2026, the **Deloitte report on the player card was released** publicly on the Department of State Growth website, with no announcement from the Government.
- The Deloitte report said **the player card would significantly reduce losses and harm** especially for those at moderate to high risk of gambling harm, **lift Tasmania's Gross State Product**, and deliver a **net increase in jobs**.



## What does the Tasmanian Liquor and Gaming Commission say?

- ✓ The independent **TLGC recommended Tasmania adopt a pokies player card** with programmed loss limits as the **most effective way to reduce pokies harm**.
- ✓ The TLGC advised **facial recognition technology was not effective in preventing or reducing pokies harm**, other than for those people already in the registered exclusion scheme.
- ✓ The **TLGC has never recommended the introduction of a ticket in-ticket out (TITO) system** for Tasmania and currently prohibits ATMs in gaming venues.

## What does the Deloitte Report say?

### *Key Finding:*

**The Report supports the Player Card, noting it would reduce expenditure and harm especially for those at moderate to high risk of gambling harm. Further, it would lift Tasmania's Gross State Product (GSP) and net employment.**

### *Context:*

Deloitte was commissioned by the Minister for Hospitality, through the Department of State Growth, to assess the economic and social impacts of the Government's Player Card, which was to be mandatory for all poker machines in Tasmania and have a daily loss cap of \$100 and annual of \$5000.

Deloitte was tasked to assess the impact of introducing the Player Card on the Tasmanian economy, the behaviour of poker machine customers and on the level of gambling harm in the state.

#### ■ ***Finding: A Player Card would Reduce Gambling Expenditure and Harm***

Through its modelling, Deloitte estimated **the Player Card would reduce poker machine losses by 23 to 46 per cent.**

Deloitte referred to research that showed cashless gambling without loss limits generally increases losses and harm, but the proposed Player Card's harm minimisation features of daily and annual loss limits would be particularly effective in controlling losses and thereby reducing harm for people at moderate to high risk of gambling harm.

Reducing the risk of higher levels of pokies harm would decrease the demand and costs for health, social support and justice and policing services, as well as improving productivity and community wellbeing.

### ■ **Finding: A Player Card would Generate Greater Economic Activity and Increased Jobs**

If the Player Card was introduced, Deloitte estimated under its central scenario there would be a **net increase in Gross State Product (GSP) of around \$230 million**.

Similarly, Deloitte estimated under its central scenario there would be a **net increase of over 200 jobs** in Tasmania.

The Player Card would reduce income for venues with poker machines but this is offset by increases in expenditure in other sectors.

Money spent on poker machines creates very few jobs compared to the same amount being spent on virtually any other goods and services in our community. So, introducing the Player Card would improve economic activity compared to the current poker machine environment.

The **positive economic benefit would especially be felt in regional areas** that have a lot of poker machines currently. This means economic benefit would be felt by non-pokies businesses in the local government areas of Devonport (pokies losses of nearly \$1 million every month), Burnie, Central Coast and Waratah/Wynyard (LGAs which each have pokies losses of about half a million dollars every month), along with the cities of Glenorchy (pokies losses of about \$2 million every month) and Launceston (pokies losses of \$1.5 million every month).

For each of these areas, a significant proportion of a reduction in these losses to poker machines would be spent elsewhere in the local economy, generating higher economic activity from:

- ✓ more available workers at higher productivity levels, due to a reduction in gambling among the workforce, and
- ✓ the substitution of pokies spending for consumption of other goods and services, generating higher employment.

### ■ **Finding: A Player Card would Reduce Government Services Costs**

In addition to generating higher economic activity, the Report shows **the player card would reduce costs locally for government associated services** relating to healthcare, mental health support, homelessness programs, policing, courts, and corrections.

Reducing poker machine losses, especially from people at risk of moderate to high risk gambling, reduces costs to government and creates a more productive community.

Having abandoned the evidence-based, TLGC-recommended, well-developed player card in June 2025, the Government announced in January 2026 a suite of new “harm minimization” measures for poker machines and their venues.

There was no public consultation on this new approach, no evidence base or research to indicate these would be effective measures to reduce or prevent harm, and very little specific detail developed on the policies.

### *Will the Government's announced new measures reduce harm from pokies?*

✘ No.

There is **no evidence the Government's announced new measures will reduce pokies harm by any significant degree**. In fact, some of the measures **will actively promote greater harm** from pokies and introduce **greater risks of money-laundering**.

### *Reducing gaming room opening hours from 20 to 17 hours per day*

Currently the gaming areas of hotels and clubs have a mandatory four-hour closure every 24 hours, at a time of the venue's choice. The January announcement increases the closure period from four hours to seven hours every 24 hours.

#### **Analysis:**

Few venues statewide operate their gaming rooms for the full currently allowable 20 hours per day. Therefore, this change is only likely to impact a small number of venues.

Gaming areas will still be allowed to be open 17 hours every day and will continue to target their hours at customers at risk of experiencing harm: after school drop-off and late at night/early morning.

Because there is no prescribed same time for the closure period, customers will be able to move to another venue if the venue they are in is about to close. A mandatory timed shutdown would be more effective so that all venues are closed at the same time.

The Government has indicated it is unwilling to mandate the closure period.

### ***Ticket In Ticket Out Cashless System of Playing Pokies***

A Ticket In Ticket Out (TITO) system would replace the current coin-based system. Customers purchase a ticket with money loaded onto it. They use it on a poker machine and get a ticket from the machine with their balance, which they can take to another machine or cash in at a cashier.

The Government intends to introduce a system that allows \$200 to be loaded onto the ticket, with \$100 being able to be loaded onto a poker machine at a time.

#### ***Analysis:***

The announcement lacks detail to properly explain the proposed system, but it is likely to operate through vending machines as this is the most common system in use elsewhere.

The policy is silent on whether people would be able to buy more than one ticket at a time, or whether there would be any limit on tickets purchased in a day. If limits on ticket purchases were to be imposed, there is no indication of how this would be monitored and enforced.

With no human oversight and no limit on how many tickets can be purchased, a TITO system can be easily used for money laundering, as it has been in other states with similar systems. Our current coin-based system has a far lower risk of money laundering, and a player card with loss limits has zero risk of money laundering.

The Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation research shows that cashless gambling, such as a TITO system, increases losses and therefore increases risk of harm unless it is accompanied by mandatory precommitment or loss limits.

The TITO policy as announced would be a major change for Tasmania from a coin-based to a cashless system. As it has no precommitment or loss limit features, evidence is clear that this will drive higher losses and greater harm.

If Tasmania is to move to a cashless system for pokies, the player card system is vastly superior to a TITO system for harm minimisation and money laundering risk.

### Cap on Poker Machine Numbers

The current cap on electronic gaming machines for hotels and clubs is 2,350 while the number of machines installed currently sits at 2274 (30 June 2025).

The Government is allowing hotels and clubs until 30 June 2026 to apply for licences to reach the cap, after which a new cap will be set at the number of machines installed at that time.

The cap may then be gradually reduced as venues relinquish their machines, with every second machine relinquished removed from the available pool and reducing the cap.

#### Analysis:

It is important to note – **less machines do not mean fewer losses or less harm**. There is not a simple relationship between the number of machines and pokies losses and it is simplistic to talk of “natural attrition” of machine numbers as harm minimization – it isn’t.

In fact, we’ve seen the opposite in recent years. In Tasmania from 2019 to 2025, the **number of pokies venues and the total number of machines in those venues have decreased, while pokies losses have increased**.

#### Data for poker machines in hotels and clubs in Tasmania

Year	No. venues	No. machines	Annual losses
30 June 2019	95	2345	\$104 million
30 June 2025	90	2274	\$112 million

Even more dramatically, over the same period **the number of machines in the two casinos has decreased substantially while losses have increased significantly**.

#### Data for poker machines in casinos in Tasmania

Year	No. machines	Annual losses
30 June 2019	1185	\$68 million
30 June 2025	949	\$81 million

*There is no evidence to suggest the announced new potentially lower cap on number of poker machines and relinquishment policy will have any harm minimisation impact in Tasmania.*

### Self-exclusion and Facial Recognition

The Government intends to introduce instant self-exclusion system for poker machines, where customers can use a QR code in the venue to put themselves on the exclusion register.

The person would be entered into a database that would be linked to new and mandatory facial recognition technology which would identify excluded customers if they enter a gaming room.

#### **Analysis:**

Exclusion mechanisms are an important part of customer protection from pokies harm, however, they largely rely on the customer acknowledging they have a problem and deciding to take action themselves. Evidence indicates only one in ten people with an addiction to poker machines seeks help, and a smaller subset of those participate in exclusion schemes.

It is important to note that **a player card also functions as an exclusion scheme** – an excluded person's card is simply deactivated, and as ID is required to set up a card, they are not able to get a new card while excluded.

In the absence of a player card, a better functioning exclusion scheme is worthwhile to invest in, but **in terms of minimising pokies harm, will only be of marginal impact**. Exclusion schemes apply to those at the extremity of an addiction, they do not help to prevent harm or prevent the development of an addiction.

As at 30 June 2025, there were 392 people in the Tasmanian exclusion scheme. **A focus on the exclusion system for harm minimization, rather than a system-wide measure such as the mandatory Player Card with loss limits, means thousands of customers will miss out on consumer protections and empowerment provided by a card system.**

Further, businesses such as casinos and hardware chains have been found to use facial recognition technology for marketing. The announced policy does not prohibit or constrain venues from using facial recognition technology installed as part of the exclusion scheme for other purposes such as marketing.

### Gaming Officers

The Government is providing funding to Hospitality Tasmania to employ three Gaming Officers statewide. These roles are stated to have an educative and support function, working with venue staff to improve the ability of venues to manage their obligations, including the challenge of responding to with people with signs of harmful gambling and addiction.

#### **Analysis:**

Apparently, this is based on model used in South Australia, although the Government did not identify why this model was chosen. Victoria has had similar Liaison Officers, but there is no evidence this has helped reduce pokies harm.

It is not clear why these roles are not attached to the TLGC, rather than the peak industry body.

The Government has stated an intention to review this initiative after 3 years and has confirmed this will be an independent review, but has not indicated the measures on which it would be assessed as successful or otherwise.

### ATMs in Venues

The Government plans to allow venues to host ATMs onsite under the condition they are fitted with facial recognition technology and have a \$400 limit set for withdrawals every 24 hours.

#### **Analysis:**

ATMs have been prohibited from Tasmanian gaming venues because under the current cash-based system, ready access to cash on the premises increases losses and harm.

**If ATMs are to be allowed in venues, it should not be until after a switch to a cashless or card-based system, or it will be a measure that increases pokies harm.**

## CONCLUSION on GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCEMENTS

Most of the measures announced by the Government in January 2026 have nothing to do with harm minimisation and, in the case of TITO, are likely to increase harm as it will mean changing to a cashless system with no loss limits imposed.

In comparison, the Player card - with its mandatory loss limits, effective self-exclusion and provision of real-time and accumulative data to the customer - provides effective customer protections and empowerment. It also would be effective in protecting against money laundering.

**Evidence tell us = Pokies Player Card with loss limits is vastly better than the Government's Industry-approved Measures**

	Prevents harm	Reduces harm	Empowers consumer choice & control	Eliminates risk of money laundering	Economic boost for Tasmania	Increases jobs for Tasmania	Better than current system?
<b>Measure advised by TLGC, progressed by Government, then abandoned:</b>							
<b>Pokies card with loss limits</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Measures announced by Government to replace pokies card:</b>							
<b>Ticket In/Ticket Out</b>	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
<b>Facial Recognition for exclusion scheme</b>	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓
<b>Poker machine numbers capped and reduced gradually</b>	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	?
<b>Gaming Officer in each region</b>	✗	?	✗	✗	✗	✗	?
<b>Gaming Rooms closed 7hrs per day instead of 4hrs</b>	✗	?	✗	✗	✗	✗	?

## Timeline of Key Events and Decisions

2020

In **February**, the Tasmanian Government began consultations for a new regulatory model for poker machines. Sixty-eight submissions were received from industry, services, researchers and individuals. The Government then consulted the public on their proposed new legislation and 26 submissions were received.

2021

In **June**, the *5th Social and Economic Impact Study (SEIS)* for Tasmania was completed. The SEIS found the use of poker machines had declined since the first study was completed in 2008 and with this, per capita losses. However, it also noted poker machines are concentrated in lower socio-economic areas, with the highest losses occurring in areas with the lowest income and educational qualifications. It also found that although only 9% of Tasmanian adults used poker machines, pokies account for more than a third of all gambling losses. Poker machines and sports betting were the gambling activities most associated with at-risk gambling.

The Tasmanian *Future Gaming Market Act 2021* was passed in **November 2021**.

In **December**, following extensive Parliamentary debate about the proposed new legislation, Tasmania's Treasurer directed the Tasmanian Liquor and Gaming Commission (TLGC) to investigate the extent to which facial recognition technology and player card gaming for poker machines could minimise gambling harm (*Ministerial Direction No. 1 2021*). The Commission was to make recommendations as to the most effective way to implement these technologies at both casinos and community venues (pubs and clubs).

2022

In **June**, the TLGC provided their report to the Treasurer on the effectiveness of facial recognition and a player card in minimizing harm. The Commission had conducted public consultations and reviewed national and international research. The Commission noted that a pre-commitment player card has been in use in Victoria in a voluntary format since December 2015. A 2019 review of the Victorian system found it was technically effective, but the voluntary nature limited its impact as consumer protection.

### 2022 cont

The Commission also noted Tasmania's casinos have had a card-based system for poker machines since 2013 and from May 2021 pre-commitment became mandatory for people joining their Premium Player Program.

#### Commission findings include:

- ➔ Card-based systems must have pre-commitment and must be mandatory.
- ➔ Loss levels should be set at a level based on research and recommended using loss levels reported in the Social and Economic Impact Study of Tasmania (SEIS).
- ➔ Harm minimization is most effective when it is preventative and protects all consumers and not only consumers already experiencing harm. The SEIS 2021 found 90% of at-risk gamblers had not sought help to restrict their gambling.
- ➔ For this reason, the Commission recommended the implementation of a mandatory pre-commitment card and did not recommend facial recognition technology (FRT).

In **August**, the Tasmanian Government announced MAX Gaming Tas as the successful tenderer for a 20-year licence to monitor all poker machines across all venue types. As of 1 July 2023 pubs and clubs in Tasmania completed their transition to the MAX Monitoring System.

The Commission's report was publicly released on **15 September 2022**: [TLGC Report to Treasurer - Investigation of harm minimisation technologies.PDF \(treasury.tas.gov.au\)](#) The same day, the Government provided their response, which agreed with the Commission's recommendation to introduce a Player Card with loss limits and that facial recognition technology is not an effective tool in preventing harm in gaming venues other than for those people already excluded: [Tasmanian Government Response - TLGC Report on Investigation of Harm Minimisation Technologies.pdf](#)

Also on **15 September 2022**, the Treasurer directed the Commission to implement a player card gaming system with pre-commitment and cashless gaming (*Ministerial Direction No. 1 2022*).

The Ministerial Direction required the Player Card System to cap losses at \$100 per day or \$5000 per year and required proof to be shown of a customer's capacity to lose more if they request an increased cap.

The Commission was to implement the new system by **December 2024**.

## Timeline of Key Events and Decisions

### 2022 cont

In **September 2022**, the TLGC completed their second review of the Responsible Gambling Mandatory Code of Practice for Tasmania. The Code is legislated to cover 10 areas: advertising, inducements, player loyalty programs, access to cash, payments of winnings, lighting, service of food and alcohol, clocks in gaming areas, staff training in recognising people with gambling problems, and information to players. The Code is to be reviewed every 5 years. The **Review in 2022** was influenced by the Government's announcement that a mandatory pre-commitment Player Card was to be implemented statewide.

#### The Commission made the following determinations:

- ➔ Outdoor signage must not encourage the use of poker machines
- ➔ Venues must not offer vouchers and rewards to be used for gambling
- ➔ Player loyalty schemes must electronically record losses and time spent and this information must be provided by Licensees to the Commission if required. This item was placed on hold for hotels and clubs until the Player Card was implemented.

### 2023

In **December 2023**, the TLGC consulted with key industry stakeholders about the design and function of the Player Card System. The consultation focussed on how venues and patrons will be impacted, including the practical impact of the policy on gaming machine play.

This paper is available here: [Preliminary consultation with industry - Player Card and Cashless Gaming](#)

### 2024

In **July 2024** the Government delayed implementation of Player Card to the end of 2025.

In **September 2024**, the TLGC sought broader public consultation (25 submissions were received). The Commission also received advice from both Treasury and MAX Gaming Tas regarding system design.

### 2024 cont

In **October 2024**, the Commission released their decisions for the new system based on their consultations and research.

**The TLGC decisions included:**

- ➔ One card per person, which would be regulated by venues checking photo identification when the person collects their card
- ➔ Card use similar to other types of cards, with a PIN and being linked to the person's bank account for loading cash.
- ➔ Default loss limits set by the Commission, with consumers able to decrease the limits when they wanted and increase the limits if able to provide evidence they can afford to lose more.
- ➔ Wins would be paid as cash at a venue or by direct bank transfer. Wins do not count towards the loss limit and can be carried over from day to day.

*The Commission decisions can be found here: [TLGC Decisions - Player Card and Cashless Gaming System Design](#)*

In **October 2024**, MAX Gaming Tas provided the Government with their "Delivery Plan Report on the Tasmanian Player Carded Gaming Platform". Specific financial costs to the Government and licensees as well as certain technical aspects are not publicly available and have been redacted from the report available on the Treasury website. However, their 173-page report showed the mandatory card was able to be implemented, providing technical details for each element of design.

In **October 2024**, the Department of State Growth engaged Deloitte Access Economics to undertake an economic and social analysis of the proposed reforms to electronic gaming machine use in Tasmania. At the time, the THA CEO (now Hospitality Tasmania) claimed the Card would lead to the closure of up to half of Tasmania's pokies venues (*ABC, October 2024*).

In **November 2024**, the Government cited the MAX Gaming Report as a reason to indefinitely delay rolling out the Player Card, claiming complexity, costs and implementation delays.

**November 2024** saw Michael Ferguson MP, who as Treasurer had led the pathway for the Player Card told the media the gambling lobby pressured the Liberals to drop the Card. He also cited that many venues are reaping enormous economic benefits of the changed licensing and taxation arrangements under the Future Gaming Market reforms that give venues a greater percentage of the losses. Mr Ferguson expressed concern about misery of families. (*ABC November 2024*)

## Timeline of Key Events and Decisions

2025

In **June 2025**, one month before the snap state election, Premier Rockliff announced his Government would not introduce a Player Card without a national approach. A further backflip on the Liberal government's initial stalling of their promised mandatory pokies pre-commitment card.

In **December 2025** Deloitte Access Economics provided their final report to the Tasmanian Government. However, the report was not immediately released publicly.

2026

On the **23<sup>rd</sup> of January 2026**, the Liberal Government announced new "*harm minimization*" measures including longer closing hours for gaming areas in hotels and clubs, a Ticket In Ticket Out system and provisions to make self-exclusion immediate and linked to facial recognition technology. They also announced a new process for setting caps on machine numbers, and that ATMs could be located in venues.

Also on **23<sup>rd</sup> of January 2026**, the final [Deloitte report](#) was published on the Department of State Growth website, with no announcement or comment from the Government.

*The Deloitte report confirmed the pokies player card with loss limits – planned, developed, then abandoned by Government - would significantly reduce pokies losses and harm to Tasmanians, especially for those at moderate to high risk of gambling harm, lift Tasmania's Gross State Product, and deliver a substantial net increase in jobs.*



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