



# Tasmanian state election briefing paper: *universal poker machine player card*

## Campaign commitment sought from independent and minor party candidates:

*To fully support the planned introduction of the universal pokies card in Tasmania, and make its introduction a condition of providing support to either major party in forming government.*

## Background

After decades of Tasmanian governments pandering to the pokies industry, allowing industry to dictate policy and block harm minimisation, in September 2022, Minister for Finance, Michael Ferguson MP, announced the introduction of a universal, mandatory player card for poker machines **by December 2024**.

This was on the recommendation of the Tasmanian Liquor and Gaming Commission (TLGC), which had been directed by the Minister to [investigate technologies to improve consumer protection](#). It is clear that the personal conviction of the Minister was a key driver of the card.

**The announcement of the pokies card meant that for the first time, a government is introducing policy that would be genuinely effective in protecting consumers. It will be a nation-leading, life-saving policy.**

Since the announcement of the universal pokies card, the Tasmanian Labor party has not provided a clear and unequivocal endorsement of the card, and have refused to clearly confirm that they would support its introduction.

Find further info on poker machine harm and the benefits of a universal card-based system for poker machines [here](#) or [here](#).

## The risk of an early election

- The Tasmanian pokies card is not yet in place – it is due to be implemented **by December 2024**.
- The industry is strongly opposed to it and will be strongly lobbying the major parties for the card to be scrapped or significantly watered down.
- If an election is held before December 2024, or if the implementation of the card is delayed, there is a risk that the card will be derailed.
- The industry is likely to be making behind-closed-doors promises and deals with both major parties in preparation for an early election.
- The industry may be pressing for less effective initiatives, such as facial recognition technology which the TLGC found would be ineffective at protecting consumers. Or may try to insist the card be voluntary, or with much larger limits, or only introduced as a limited trial – also tried elsewhere and found to be ineffective.
- Either major party, in their quest to form government, might cave in to the industry's demands.
- Political lobbying and donations are highly influential, leaving the door wide open for ongoing and secret industry influence on major parties.

For example, prior to the 2021 state election, Labor secretly signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Tasmanian Hospitality Association. This MoU states the two parties agree “to work together on potential, viable harm minimisation measures for gaming products while also agreeing that any measures need to be workable for the industry” – an effective industry veto. The MoU also establishes that the two will meet regularly and consult on policy matters. This MoU is valid until a new one is signed. It might still be in place – the public only heard about the 2021 agreement after it was leaked. Find more info on the Labor/THA MoU [here](#).

## The importance of independents & minor party candidates

- It is anticipated that the next Tasmanian parliament, restored to 35 seats, will have more independents and minor parties in the lower house.
- Liberal or Labor may be forced to negotiate with minor parties and independents to form government.
- Independents and minor parties will be in a powerful position to ensure the next government continues on the path of strong consumer protection and fully implements the poker machine card, as designed by the TLGC.

This is a position that is overwhelmingly supported by the Tasmanian community and is in the social and economic best interests of our state.

Pokies are clustered in Tasmania’s most disadvantaged suburbs; close to half the money taken by pokies comes from people with an addiction; on average, for every person with an addiction to pokies, seven people around them also being harmed; in 2022/23, Tasmanians lost \$190 million to poker machines.

**Every independent or minor party candidate can become a champion for pokies harm reduction by committing to the full introduction of the universal mandatory pokies card, and by making this a condition of their support to either major party in forming government.**

**Independent and minor party candidates who are elected to the next Tasmanian parliament, will be in a position to ensure a universal, mandatory, limit-setting poker machine player card is introduced, as promised.**

### Further information:

- <https://megwebb.com.au/pokies/>
- <https://www.anglicare-tas.org.au/social-action-research-centre/>
- <https://tasmanianinquirer.com.au/news/tasmanian-labor-and-liberal-parties-refuse-to-reveal-agreements-with-industry-groups/>
- <https://www.treasury.tas.gov.au/Documents/TLGC%20Report%20to%20Treasurer%20-%20Investigation%20of%20harm%20minimisation%20technologies.PDF>