

NEWS

**GAMING POLICY DELAY** Up to \$190 million to be lost during wait for gaming card

# No bet limits on poker machines

Matt Maloney

THE state government will not impose bet limits on poker machines or reducing spin speeds as additional harm reduction measures amid a delay in the rollout of a mandatory pre-commitment gaming card for poker machines use in Tasmania.

Finance Minister Nic Street on Tuesday night confirmed that the gaming service provider responsible for the development of the card which would set firm loss limits for players needed at least another 18 months for the new system to be implemented.

The government has originally committed to have the card in place from December 2024.

This led anti-pokies advocate and Nelson independent Meg Webb and TasCOSS to both call for other harm minimisation measures to be put in place in the interim.

TasCOSS chief executive Adrienne Picone suggested that \$1 bet limits and slower spin speeds should be put in place.

"It is estimated that waiting an extra year for the introduction of the pre-commitment card will result in Tasmanians losing an additional \$189.1 million to poker machines," she said.

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

"Beyond the person experiencing gambling problems, family members, friends, employers and colleagues can also be affected, and as many as one-in-three Tasmanians personally know someone with a serious problem gambling on poker machines."



Meg Webb says \$15.7 million was lost on Tasmanian poker machines in May.

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**Vica Bayley**

Ms Webb said Tasmanians experienced high losses to poker machines each month, well above pre-COVID levels.

"There was a further \$15.7 million lost in May - and we know that around half of those losses come from people who are addicted," she said.

Mr Street said the government would look at other jurisdictions where detection of problem gambling behaviour in real time was built into gaming machines

software to enable direct intervention.

He said it would engage with venues interested in facial recognition technology to identify excluded individuals, under the gambling exclusion scheme.

Ms Webb said lower bet limits and slower spin speeds required simple programming adjustments, adding that facial recognition technology was not an appropriate and effective harm reduction measure, and that little was

to be gained from additional promotion of the gambling exclusion scheme.

"It is the ambulance at the bottom of the hill for a limited number of people at the most extreme stage of their addiction," she said.

Anglicare's Social Action and Research Centre co-ordinator Mary Bennett said it was disappointing that the universal poker machine card would be delayed by another 12 months from the December deadline as it would benefit the whole Tasmanian community and save lives.

"Anglicare wants to see the full recommended system in place and operating in our state - giving people a crucial tool for only losing to poker machines what they can afford to lose," she said.

"We understand that this reform represents a huge body of work, and we believe

it's vital that it's delivered in full."

Greens treasury spokesman Vica Bayley said news of a delay to the gaming card's roll-out was concerning.

"There is no doubt that poker machines operating unchecked for another 18 months will result in deep and serious harm to Tasmanians and the community," he said.

"The least the government could do is to step in with urgent interim measures to limit harm until the new card system is in place."

Mr Bayley said the Finance Minister needed to provide a full and detailed account of exactly the challenged that had been encountered by Maxgaming in the pre-commitment card's development.

