

08 NEWS

Gambling reform waits on operator

Angry MPs warn of harm after delays to player card

David Killick

Anti-gambling MPs have expressed disappointment that plans for a card-based precommitment scheme for poker machines have been delayed by at least 18 months.

The state government pledged the scheme in 2022, to limit the losses incurred by problem gamblers.

The nation-leading reform was to be cashless and to set default loss limits of \$100 a day, \$500 a month and \$5000 per year. It was to be in place by the end of this year.

Minister for Finance Nic Street said the scheme – to be operated by Tasmanian monitoring licence operator MaxGaming Holdings – would be up and running “as soon as reasonably practical”.

“Our government has previously acknowledged that implementing such a system is a complex task, and as such, the development and full and efficient implementation may take more time than originally anticipated,” Mr Street said.

“It has become clear that MaxGaming require more time than originally expected to develop and implement the player card gaming system, which is a nation-leading, brand-new technology that requires at least another 18 months of development.

“While this extension is dis-



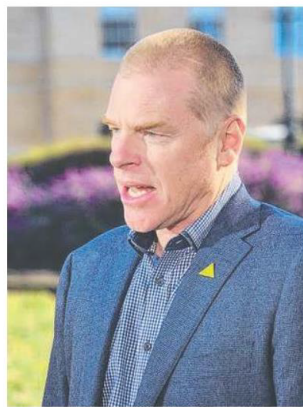
Greens Treasury spokesman Vica Bayley says delays in plans for a card-based precommitment scheme for poker machines will prolong gambling harm.

appointing, the project is progressing with work on the system design completed.

“We are taking action right now to reduce gambling harm through our 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania’s Future, including by investing \$100,000 to promote awareness of the Gambling Exclusion Scheme and working with interested venues to implement Facial Recognition Technology.”

Greens Treasury spokesman Vica Bayley said it was disappointing that the government didn’t inform the public about the delays sooner.

“It’s clearly disappointing because this will simply prolong the harm that’s been done to addicts, to their families and



other dependants of them,” Mr Bayley said.

“Everybody knows that pokies cause significant harm across the community, almost \$200m lost in the last financial year, monthly totals that are above pre-Covid levels.

“This is the kind of thing that Tasmanians would expect the Tasmanian government to proactively come out and announce and explain as soon as they are informed.”

Independent MLC Meg Webb said there were other

measures the government could be taking.

“It’s unacceptable for Minister Street and the state government to stand by and do nothing meaningful for a further 12 months while Tasmanian families suffer the harm caused by addiction to poker machines,” she said.

“The evidence is clear. We know what will work to cut harm immediately – lower bet limits and slower spin speeds, which are simple programming adjustments,” she said.

Ms Webb said the Tasmanian Liquor and Gaming Commission made it clear that facial recognition technology was not an appropriate or effective harm-reduction measure for Tasmania and posed considerable privacy concerns.

Federal independent member for Clark Andrew Wilkie said the importance of the trial could not be overstated.

“While I welcome that the government still appears to be committed to the implementation, I worry that in reality they’re just kicking the can down the road or bowing to the gambling industry.

“The simple truth is that it’s nearly been two years since the announcement was made, but there has been little to show for it, despite the benefits of such a system being well researched and systems already available to introduce into service.”