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# Pokies look to be bulletproof despite Tasmania's cost of living crisis

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| 2



The pokies. File picture

Cost of living pressures are squeezing most Tasmanians, but the pokies seem to be immune.

More money was lost on [the pokies](#) statewide in each of May, June and July than in the corresponding months of 2023, according to figures from state Treasury's Liquor and Gaming Branch.

The losses in the recent months were comparable to losses in the same period of 2022.

Overall, pokies losses totalled:

- \$15.74 million in May;
- \$14.64 million in June; and
- \$16.74 million in July.

The persistence of pokies losses suggested many users were not cutting back, even after housing prices and grocery and other costs soared in recent years as Australia grappled with high inflation.


Nelson independent MLC and pokies critic Meg Webb was not surprised by that.

"Addiction to pokies is often triggered by or made worse by stress in people's lives, which means we often, sadly, see losses to pokies go up during times of increased cost of living stresses," Ms Webb said.

"High losses to pokies during the current cost of living crisis will be having an even more devastating impact on Tasmanian families as they struggle to cover basic daily expenses.

"We are seeing the ripple effect of pokies addiction in our community, impacting family, friends, workplaces and increasing family breakdown, homelessness and pressure on our health and criminal justice systems."

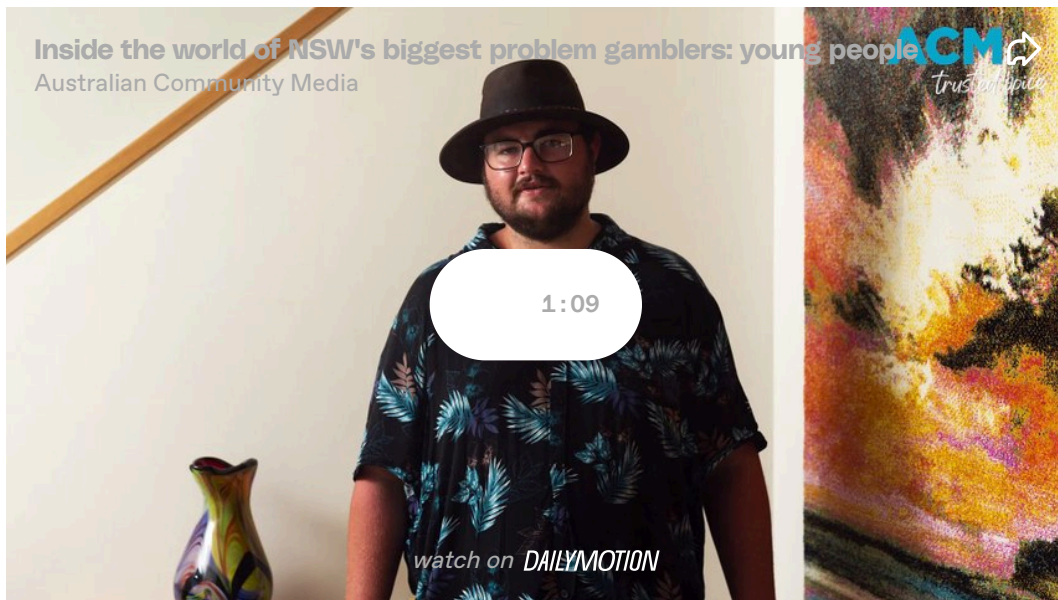
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■ Jay Bateman lost a decade of his life to problem gambling, and he's not alone. Young Australians are the demographic most at risk of this election headlining issue, yet political reform is zeroed in on those aged 40 to 50.

The state government is working towards introducing a card-based system for poker machines that would slash players' potential losses.

Its introduction was recently delayed for a further year.

Greens Treasury spokesperson Vica Bayley in July said that meant it was at least 18 months away.

He and Ms Webb both called for urgent harm reduction measures to be adopted in the meantime.

"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," Mr Bayley 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."

Ms Webb in July said: "Every month we continue to see Tasmanians experiencing high losses to poker machines, 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 another year's delay meant another \$190 million in losses "flowing out of our most vulnerable suburbs through deliberately addictive machines".

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