

Briefing Paper: Background & Timeline of the universal poker machine player card

Office of Meg Webb MLC | October 2024

Background

- After decades of Tasmanian governments pandering to the pokies industry, allowing industry to dictate policy and block harm minimization measures, 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](#).
- 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.
- 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, an average of seven people around them are also being harmed.
- In **2023-24** Tasmanians lost a total of **\$186 million on pokies**. Evidence indicates around half – approximately \$90m – was bled from Tasmanians addicted to pokies.
- Find further info on poker machine harm and the benefits of a universal card-based system for poker machines [here](#) or [here](#).

Timeline of Pokies Pre-Commitment Card Developments:

- **1999** - the Productivity Commission recommended a mandatory cashless card with loss limits as the best way to reduce harm from poker machines.
- **July 2022** - Tasmanian Liquor and Gaming Commission recommends the introduction of mandatory pre commitment registered cards for pokies for all players in all Tasmanian hotels, clubs and casinos.
- **21 September 2022** – the-Treasurer Michael Ferguson issued a Ministerial Direction for the TLGC to commence work to implement the pre-commitment card, scheduled for implementation to commence by December 2024.
- The TLGC had subsequently advised that logistics meant implementation may be delayed until December 2025.
- **December 2023** -the TLGC seeks input key industry stakeholder on the system design and implementation plan, see TLGC Paper: [Preliminary consultation with industry - Player Card and Cashless Gaming](#)
- **March 2024 state election** – concerned pokies reform advocates warn the early election may see gaming industry interests seek to lobby parties and candidates to overturn, or significantly water-down, the mandatory pokies pre-commitment card reforms.

- **9 September 2024** – TLGC releases Player Card and Cashless Gaming Consultation paper for public consultation.
- **14 October 2024** – Deputy Premier and Treasurer Michael Ferguson MP announces resignation from Cabinet. Premier Jeremy Rockliff takes on Acting Treasurer portfolio.
- **16 October 2024** –
 - ▶ During House of Assembly morning Question Time four questions are put to the Premier calling for clarification of the government’s ongoing commitment to pursue the full and timely implementation of the pokies pre-commitment card as recommended by – and currently undertaken by – the TLGC.
 - ▶ During House of Assembly Adjournment debate that evening, the Leader of Government Business informed the House that the government had sought further advice from the Department of State Growth re the pokies pre-commitment policy and State growth had commissioned Deloitte Access Economics to undertake a social and economic impact assessment, apparently with a focus on regional and tourism impacts. Although it was said the Report would be made public, it was not stated when.
- **17 October 2024** - During House of Assembly morning Question Time further questions on the Deloitte Access Economics review, including for the review’s Terms of Reference to be released. The Premier undertook to look into that and report back.
- **18 October 2024** –
 - ▶ Public consultation closes on the TLGC Player Card and Cashless Gaming Consultation Paper.
 - ▶ Further media requests to the Premier for the Terms of Reference for the Deloitte Access Economic review.
- **23 October 2024** – in light of the Deloitte Access Economic review Terms of Reference still not publicly released, the Hon Meg Webb MLC tabled a motion in the Legislative Council calling for its immediate public release. This motion is scheduled to be debated on **Tuesday the 29 October**.

Early State Election Risks – warnings issued by Meg Webb MLC in February prior to March 2024 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.