



Tasmanian 2025 state election briefing paper: *Pokies pre-commitment card backgrounder*

Campaign commitment sought from Independent and minor party candidates:

To fully support the introduction of the universal pokies card in Tasmania during the term of the next parliament, and make the card's 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, the then-Minister for Finance, 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 then-Minister was a key driver of the card.

The 2022 announcement of the pokies card meant that for the first time, a Tasmanian government was introducing policy that would be genuinely effective in protecting consumers.

It would 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 has refused to clearly confirm that it would support introduction of the card. Instead, the Labor party promotes industry-favoured facial recognition technology, which the TLGC advised would not be effective in preventing or reducing harm.

The early state election in March 2024 saw the Liberal Party begin to water down its commitment to the introduction of a Tasmanian universal pokies card. After the removal of the former Minister who had championed the card from Cabinet and as the responsible Minister in October 2024, the Tasmanian Liberal Government confirmed in November 2024 it was abandoning the pokies card altogether.

The context at the 2025 early election

- All the work by the TLGC to develop the Tasmanian pokies card is still in place – it can be resumed by a new government committed to its implementation.
- The industry is strongly opposed to the pokies card and will continue to strongly lobby the major parties for it to remain on ice indefinitely.
- The industry will continue pressing for less effective initiatives, such as facial recognition technology which the TLGC found would be ineffective at preventing or reducing harm.
- The industry is likely to be donating to both major parties prior to this election to secure their ongoing position against implementation of the card.
- Political lobbying and donations are highly influential, leaving the door wide open for ongoing and secret industry influence on major parties.

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

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 will continue to have a strong cross-bench of independents and minor parties in the lower house.
- The Liberal or Labor party will likely need 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 returns to 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 2023/24, Tasmanians lost over \$186 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 pokies card, and by making this a condition of support to either major party in forming government.

Independent and minor party MPs in the next Tasmanian parliament, will be in a position to ensure a universal, mandatory, limit-setting poker machine 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>



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