

Pokies loss tops \$18m in a month

David Killick

Tasmanians lost more than \$18m gambling on poker machines in July, the highest monthly figure in five years, new Treasury data shows.

Reforms to gambling laws intended to reduce harm have stalled, the Greens say, in part because the major parties have been compromised by gambling industry donations.

Annual losses topped \$195m last financial year.

Greens Treasury and Finance spokesman Vica Bayley said the need for significant reform to reduce the harm caused by poker machines had never been more apparent.

“What we’re seeing is Tas-

mitment scheme was the superior idea.

“These numbers today from Treasury, escalating losses to predatory poker machines across the state, is a real wake-up call, and it should be a real impetus to the Premier to get his mandatory precommitment card back on track so that Tasmanians are protected from the harm from gambling machines,” he said.

“We know that the poker machine industry has donated to both major parties over many, many years, and we know that that buys policy outcomes, and one of those policy outcomes is clearly the Premier walking back from his commitment to introduce

manians, many of these people, vulnerable Tasmanians, in incredibly vulnerable situations, losing more and more money on poker machines across the state," Mr Bayley said.

"Now we know it is scientifically proven that poker machines cause harm.

"They cause poverty, they cause domestic violence, they cause crime, and in the worst of situations, they lead to the suicide of problem gamblers."

The state government pledged in 2022 to introduce a card-based mandatory pre-commitment scheme to limit the losses incurred by problem gamblers.

The nation-leading reforms were to have established cashless gambling with set default loss limits of \$100 a day, \$500 a month, and \$5000 per year.

But it was opposed by the industry, which wants CCTV-based facial recognition to identify and exclude problem gamblers from venues, and the Liberals walked away from the plan.

Mr Bayley said the precom-

mandatory precommitment cards."

Nelson independent MLC Meg Webb said the figures were extremely troubling.

"Tasmanians lost almost \$18.5m on pokies over the month of July alone, which is almost \$600,000 lost each day," Ms Webb said.

Liberal minister Madeleine Ogilvie said the government was doing what it could to act in the best interests of all Tasmanians to balance freedom to choose with protections from harm.

"We are very serious about our response to problem gaming; we want to make sure that we've got wraparound services to anybody who has that problem," she said.

"It's not just pokies, it's online gaming as well, so it's a broader picture.

"We also want to use new technology ... a conversation is happening around what is the best technology we can use to help people exclude or control that problematic gaming behaviour."
