

The Libs would end greyhound racing to prevent risk

With shockingly high pokies losses of \$18.5m for the month of July and decade-high 2024-25 annual losses of over \$193m, Tasmanians were given a clear indication last week of exactly how little the Rockliff Liberal government cares about the pokies harm being wrought on Tasmanian families.

Last year, the Liberal government betrayed the Tasmanian community with its 11th-hour abandonment of the nation-leading mandatory pokies card with loss limits.

‘Managing’ problem gambling is not enough. We must prevent harm, **Meg Webb** writes

It now has the shameless effrontery to give lip service to the harm caused while promoting pokies industry-dictated policies with no credibility, no basis in evidence, and which will reduce pokies harm to Tasmanians by not one iota.

Liberal Minister Madeleine Ogilvie stated in last week’s media: “It’s just not clear to me whether those losses are all from people who have a

problem with gambling. I think they are probably not.”

Of course not, minister.

But such an inane comment begs the question: what proportion of the \$18.5m lost in July would the minister consider to be an acceptable level of losses from Tasmanians suffering a pokies addiction? – 10 per cent? 25 per cent?

Surely, she would not imply 100 per

cent is needed to warrant an effective public policy response?

It appears she and perhaps the rest of cabinet weren’t listening to the countless previous times experts have provided this information.

Evidence clearly demonstrates that around half the losses to poker machines come from people showing signs of harmful gambling, that is, signs of being addicted to them.

The Productivity Commission and our regular Tasmanian Social and Economic Impact Studies on gambling are just two of many handy sources that provide this evidence.

Faux confusion or ignorance from any member of the Tasmanian Liberal cabinet on this topic is negligent and utterly unacceptable.

If the minister or anyone else wishes to quibble over that figure, they can go right ahead and nominate the figure they think is the tolerable level of addiction-generated pokies profit in this state and explain how they will limit harm to that level.

Minister Ogilvie also said: “We want to make sure that problem gaming is as well managed as we can.”

No, minister, we want to prevent pokies harm.

to dogs, but they won’t stop pokies harming families

Tasmanian lives are at stake. That warrants far more than allowing “well-managed” harm.

Tasmanians deserve a state government using every available evidence-based policy and regulatory lever to prevent pokies addiction to the greatest extent possible and to provide the best-quality support services to those impacted by it.

The Rockliff Liberal government do neither of those things.

The minister seems transfixed with the promise of new technology.

Ironically, that is exactly how experts describe the mandatory

pokies card with loss limits that the Liberals abandoned.

Obtusely pointing to facial recognition as “new technology to guide our way forward” flies in the face of all expert advice and evidence.

The independent Tasmanian Gaming Commission rejected facial recognition and instead indicated a pokies card as the best way forward.

However, it is the pokies industry demanded option, perhaps off the back of donations provided during state election campaigns recently.

Facial recognition technology will do nothing to prevent addiction.

It is only for when people’s lives have already crashed and burned as a result of pokies addiction.

Pokies’ vested interests behave just like Big Tobacco companies in decades past – engaging in political influence to slow, weaken or prevent the implementation of new, effective public health policies to reduce addiction and harm.

They use political inducements and threats to keep the Liberal and Labor parties compliant, to protect their addiction-derived super-profits.

So, while Minister Ogilvie told us last week: “We all know and we all

care deeply about families that are impacted by problem gaming ... we want to make sure that we look after them” – the Liberal government’s actions indicate the polar opposite.

The Rockliff Liberal government is prepared to take the laudable, nation-leading step of shutting-down the entire greyhound racing industry to prevent its unacceptable risks to dog welfare, yet it will not take effective action to make poker machines safer to prevent devastating harm to Tasmanian families.

A collaborative new parliament will require a clear shared understanding

and prioritisation of the public interest of the Tasmanian community – that is not the case on pokies.

The Liberal government and Labor Opposition choose to allow Tasmanians to be needlessly harmed by poker machines because they put the profits of pokies industry owners, and their own political self-interest, above the health, wellbeing, and lives of Tasmanians. It is as plain, and as shameful, as that.

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