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NEWS 03

Pokies cost Tassie \$208m

State's gamblers set new record for losses on poker machines

Bridget Clarke

Tasmanians lost nearly \$210m on poker machines in the last financial year – the highest figure on record, new Treasury data shows.

The figures have heightened calls for the state government to recommit to its nation-leading card-based mandatory pre-commitment scheme, which it scrapped in its latest round of reforms after industry pressure.

Treasury data shows in the financial year 2025-2026, Tasmanians lost \$208.2m on poker machine gambling, up 7.4 per



**Alliance for
Gambling
Reform's
Mark
Kempster**

cent on the previous year. Independent MLC Meg Webb labelled the findings “horrificing”, while Alliance for Gambling Reform spokesperson Mark Kempster said they should “alarm every single Tasmanian”.

It comes after documents released under Right to Information laws revealed the

state's Liquor and Gambling Commission was not consulted about the Liberal government's latest round of poker machine reforms.

The changes, announced by Treasurer Eric Abetz in April, included reduced opening hours and the rollout of facial recognition technology to exclude problem gamblers.

Absent from the reforms was the precommitment card, which the government had previously committed to implementing in 2022.

The card requires gamblers to set spending limits before they use poker machines.

Citing a desire for a “national approach” to gambling harm minimisation, the government dropped the card from reforms. It said the card lacked interstate support.

Mr Kempster said in scrapping the card the government – and the Labor opposition – had bowed down to the “power of the pokie barons and gambling industry”.

“Tasmania had the absolute gold standard of poker machine harm minimisation ready to go in mandatory pre-commitment cards. These have been proven all over the world that they are the best form of

defence against poker machine card,” he said.

“The proposed suite of gambling reform measures will not come close to tackling the harm these figures today show.”

Ms Webb said the latest figures were an “indictment” on the state government and described the latest reforms as “sham” and “fake harm reduction” measures.

“This is an indictment on the Rockliff government, which ignored expert evidence clearly saying increased losses would result when the licensing model changed, creating a

more competitive environment never before seen in Tasmania,” Ms Webb said.

Questioned on Friday about why the government was introducing reforms the Gaming Commission said would “take Tasmania backwards”, Acting Premier Guy Barnett said “you want to see the big picture ... and the big picture is that harm minimisation measures we've got in place and will continue to roll out will be substantial”.

“We're looking forward to that investment taking place.

“We'll keep that under (scrutiny) and if we can do more I'm sure we will.”