

Premier

Level 11, Executive Building, 15 Murray Street, Hobart Tas
GPO Box 123, Hobart, Tas 7001 Australia
Ph +61 3 6233 3464 Fax +61 3 6234 1572
Email Premier@dpac.tas.gov.au
Web www.premier.tas.gov.au



5 JAN 2011

The Right Reverend John D Harrower OAM
Bishop of Tasmania
Anglican Diocese Of Tasmania
GPO Box 748
HOBART TAS 7001

Dear Bishop Harrower

I am writing in response to your letter of 26 July 2011 to the Premier and also Senator Helen Polley, regarding concerns the Tasmanian Anglican community has in relation to gambling. I apologise that this response has taken some time to finalise.

Thank you for highlighting some of the findings identified by the Productivity Commission in its June 2010 report. The Tasmanian Government is aware of the findings and recommendations in this report and is committed to ensuring there are appropriate harm minimisation measures that will make gambling, and in particular electronic gaming machines (EGMs), safer for all players.

Tasmania is a national leader in addressing the harm from problem gambling and promoting responsible gambling. For example, Tasmania is the only jurisdiction that currently prohibits ATMs in hotels and clubs with gaming facilities. Tasmania was among the first jurisdictions to introduce a comprehensive player exclusions system, and more recently, requires the maximum bet limit for EGM games to be the lowest setting available (\$5 per spin) and the lowest number of lines (30) for all venues including the casinos.

As the Minister responsible for gambling in Tasmania, the Premier is a member of the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) Select Council on Gambling Reform. At the Select Council's recent meeting in May 2011, Tasmania indicated its support for a national mandatory pre-commitment system for EGMs. While other jurisdictions were unable to provide similar support for mandatory pre-commitment, all Ministers agreed that pre-commitment is a useful tool to help people set limits on how much they want to spend on EGMs. Further work is being done by the Council to assess the required functionality for pre-commitment and a timetable for implementation.

Due to differences in the taxing powers between the Australian Government and the states and territories, the sources of taxation available to state and territory governments are limited. While gambling taxes are an important source of own source revenue, such taxes represent a modest contribution (two per cent) to total revenue for Tasmania.

The Tasmanian Government is not influenced by gambling taxes in its consideration of reducing harm from problem gambling. Furthermore, a proportion of a gambling operators' revenue from EGMs is paid into the Community Support Levy, with 50 per cent of that levy (estimated at \$2.5 million in 2010-11) allocated to research, treatment and services for problem gambling.




Political donations come from a variety of organisations and individuals and it is a legal requirement that donations to registered political parties above the disclosure threshold (\$11 200 for 2009-10) are declared to the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC). The AEC publishes this donation information on its website. In 2009-10 the Australian Labor Party (Tasmanian Branch) received 1.5 per cent of total receipts through donations from gambling operators.

I can assure you that donations from gambling operators do not influence the Tasmanian Government in its commitment to fostering responsible gambling and to minimise the harm from problem gambling. On the contrary, the Government has pressed ahead with substantial harm minimisation measures, some of which have been strongly opposed by gambling operators. I have attached a summary of the harm minimisation measures which the Government has introduced to date.

Thank you for the opportunity to clarify the Tasmanian Government's approach.

Yours sincerely



Bryan Green MP
Acting Premier
Acting Treasurer

CC

Senator Helen Polley
Labor Senator for Tasmania
Deputy Government Whip in the Senate

OVERVIEW OF GAMBLING HARM MINIMISATION MEASURES IN TASMANIA

- Harm minimisation measures have been introduced over many years in Tasmania and more recently, a package of measures were introduced in 2009 in response to the 2008 Social and Economic Impact Study of Gambling in Tasmania to further address problem gambling.
- A second Social and Economic Impact Study of Gambling in Tasmania is currently underway and the Government will also consider the findings of that study when it is completed by the end of 2011.
- The ongoing reviews of the social and economic impacts of gambling will ensure that Tasmania continues to be at the forefront in addressing the harm from problem gambling.
- Harm minimisation and problem gambling is also being addressed at the national level through the work program of the Council of Australian Governments Select Council on Gambling Reform to develop a national approach to the findings and recommendations of 2010 Productivity Commission Report into gambling.
- The priority work of the Council is to consider the implementation of gambling reforms required under an Agreement between the Prime Minister and Mr Andrew Wilkie MP which includes a mandatory pre-commitment system for EGMs, dynamic warnings and cost of play displays on EGMs, and restrictions on ATM withdrawals in gaming venues.
- The Tasmanian Government was the only jurisdiction to give in-principle support for a mandatory pre-commitment system provided it was introduced nationwide because Tasmania is a small jurisdiction it cannot implement this reform on its own.

Harm minimisation measures introduced prior to the Government's response to the 2008 Social and Economic Impact Study

- comprehensive gambling exclusions scheme and on-line exclusions database;
A person may be excluded from any gaming venue by excluding themselves (self-exclusion), by a venue operator, by the Gaming Commission at the request of a third-party who has a close personal interest in that person's welfare, or by the Commissioner of Police.
- caps on gaming machine numbers including a state-wide cap of 3 680 (2 500 for hotels and clubs) and venue caps of 30 for hotels and 40 for clubs;
- compulsory training in the responsible service of gambling for all licensed gaming staff;
- a blanket ban on gaming using credit, including credit cards;
- a ban on automatic teller machines (ATMs) in hotels and clubs with gaming facilities;
- restrictions on the use of EFTPOS and the cashing of cheques in hotels and clubs with gaming facilities;

- a ban on note acceptors in gaming machines in hotels and clubs;
- a maximum bet limit of ten dollars (now \$5) on all gaming machines in hotels and clubs;
- EFTPOS and ATM facilities prohibited in casino gaming areas;
- a ban on entry by minors to any gambling product or service;
- restrictions on the advertising of gambling products and services through a code of practice;
- a requirement that gaming areas in hotels and clubs must not be used as thoroughfares and that gaming areas must not be the sole means of accessing exits or toilets;
- a requirement that clocks be displayed on new video gaming machines that incorporate this functionality in their software.
- gaming facilities can only be operated at the licensed premises for a maximum of 20 hours within any 24-hour period. There must be at least four continuous hours each day when gaming machines and/or keno are not in use;
- compulsory player information displays required on all new gaming machines;
- legislated ban on smoking in gaming areas since 1 January 2006; and
- a requirement that a social and economic impact study of gambling be undertaken every three years.

Harm minimisation measures introduced in response to 2008 Social and Economic Impact Study

- Casinos are required to ensure that cheques drawn on Australian banks are banked within five business days in order to minimise the use of un-presented cheques as a form of credit betting.
Status: completed – a requirement from 1 October 2009.
- enhance the existing Responsible Conduct of Gaming course with a specific focus on problem gambler identification and appropriate level of intervention.
Status: in progress.
- reduce bet limits from \$10 to \$5 per spin for all gaming machines in all gaming venues.
Status: completed - a requirement for new EGMs from 1 April 2010 with all EGMs by 30 June 2011.
- reduce the maximum possible lines played on gaming machines from 50 to 30.
Status: completed - a requirement for new EGMs from 1 April 2010 with all EGMs by 30 June 2011.
- reduce the machine cash input limits (note acceptors in Casinos) from \$9 899 to \$500.

Status: completed - a requirement for new EGMs from 1 April 2010 with all EGMs by 30 June 2011.

- enhance restrictions on access to gambling by minors creating two new offences for special employees – for allowing minors to enter or remain in a restricted gaming area and for allowing minors to enter or remain in a restricted gaming area.

Status: completed November 2009.

- strengthen gambling penalties and the introduction of infringement notices aligning penalties with similar offences under the *Liquor Licensing Act 1990*.

Status: completed 27 April 2011.

- establish the requirement for a mandatory code of practice that will replace the current voluntary codes, and include provisions relating to:
 - advertising gambling products;
 - inducements that may lead to problem gambling behaviour;
 - player loyalty programs;
 - further restrictions on access to cash;
 - payment of winnings
 - minimum lighting standards;
 - service of food and alcohol;
 - clocks in gaming areas;
 - staff training in recognising people with gambling problems; and
 - information to players.

Status: Mandatory code is completed – to commence March 2012.

- strengthen the gaming exclusions regime for self-excluded gamblers by setting minimum (six months) and maximum periods (three years) of exclusion and limiting the type of exclusion to whole venue or just gambling in restricted area and disallow entry to restricted area.

Status: commenced 18 August 2010.

- establish a statutory obligation that the Tasmanian Gaming Commission foster responsible gambling and minimise problem gambling

Status: commenced November 2009.

- **DHHS to review the effectiveness of the Helpline services**
Status: completed February 2011.
- **DHHS to undertake specific educational campaign for “at risk” target groups.**
Status: in progress.
- **develop a whole-of-government strategy to combat problem gambling**
Status: deferred pending outcome of national reform