



Catryna Bilyk

Labor Senator for Tasmania

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Ref: BE

4 August 2011

The Right Revd John Harrower OAM
Bishop of Tasmania
GPO BOX 748
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Dear Reverend Harrower

Thank you for your correspondence of 26 July 2011 regarding problem gambling.

Problem gambling destroys families and ruins lives. One in six people who play pokies regularly has a serious addiction.

Problem gamblers spend on average around \$21,000 each year – which is a third of the average Australian annual salary.

The Government understands that gambling is an enjoyable activity for many, but for some people excessive gambling can have dire consequences. It is these people we have a duty of care to help.

The Gillard Government's initiatives are based on the recommendations of a major, independent inquiry into gambling in Australia, conducted by the Productivity Commission.

The Australian Government will work with the states and territories to implement a full pre-commitment scheme for poker machines by 2014.

The Government supports full pre-commitment because we agree with the Productivity Commission that this is the most targeted and effective measure to help problem gamblers and those at risk, without adversely impacting on recreational gamblers.

The idea behind pre-commitment is that we can use technology to give people a

tool, at the beginning of a gambling session, to think about how much they want to spend, set limits and stick to them.

Under the model recommended by the Productivity Commission, players can set the limit as high or low as they like, and players could choose no limit at all if they prefer.

The Government does not support fingerprinting of club patrons or collecting biometric data. We will not be adopting this kind of technology, but a simple and cost-effective card-based solution.

The Government is also committed to working with the states and territories to introduce a \$250 daily withdrawal limit from ATMs in venues with poker machines, except for casinos.

Rural venues may also need special consideration on our commitment to limit withdrawals from ATMs to \$250 a day. In some small rural towns, the only ATM in town is inside the club or pub. We will consider exemptions from the ATM limit in towns where there are no other banking facilities available.

The Government is working with the states and territories to reach an agreement on a pre-commitment system that can be implemented at a local level.

We are also receiving expert and specialist advice from industry, researchers and the community sector through a Ministerial Expert Advisory Group.

Thank you again for your letter and please contact my office on 6229 4444 if I can be of further assistance to you.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Catryna Bilyk', with a stylized flourish at the end.

CATRYNA BILYK
SENATOR FOR TASMANIA