



**The Hon Jenny Macklin MP
Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services
and Indigenous Affairs**

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

Dear Bishop Harrower

Thank you for your letter to the Attorney-General, the Hon Robert McClelland MP, about the Australian Government's gambling changes. Your letter was referred to me as this matter falls within my portfolio responsibilities. I apologise for the lengthy delay in responding.

The Government shares your view that problem gambling is a significant issue in our community with devastating social, financial and emotional consequences. We thank the Anglican Diocese of Tasmania for its support.

As you noted in your letter, the Productivity Commission's Inquiry Report on Gambling provided compelling evidence concerning the incidence and level of problem gambling in Australia. In fact, problem gamblers spend an average of \$21,000 each year on poker machines, which is a third of the average Australian annual salary. That's a lot of money by anyone's standards, money that isn't being spent on food, bills or the family mortgage.

Three-quarters of problem gamblers have problems with poker machines. In fact, one in six people who play pokies regularly has a serious addiction.

That's why the Government is committed to introducing changes to reduce the impact of problem gambling in our communities. It is important that the Government continues to be supported by organisations such as yours, as this is no easy task but it is necessary if we are to provide the duty of care we owe thousands of individuals and families whose lives are being ruined by poker machines.

These changes are the result of a year-long inquiry into gambling in Australia done by the Productivity Commission – an independent economic advisory body. It was based on the best evidence from researchers, the industry and those who work with people with gambling problems every day. Full pre-commitment was a key recommendation of the Productivity Commission.

The idea behind pre-commitment is that we can use technology to help people set limits on how much they want to spend on poker machines and stick to them.

The Government has also committed to introduce electronic warnings on poker machines to provide more information to players, and a \$250 daily withdrawal limit from ATMs in gaming venues.

The Government is working with state and territory governments to progress a national response to the full set of recommendations in the Productivity Commission's report through the new Council of Australian Governments' Select Council on Gambling Reform.

You may wish to write to the Premier of Tasmania, the Hon Lara Giddings MP, about reliance on tax revenue at:

Executive Building Level 11
15 Murray Street
HOBART TAS 7000

Thank you again for writing and for your support of the Government's gambling reforms.

Yours sincerely



JENNY MACKLIN MP