



\$20 MILLION POKIES LOBBY AD CAMPAIGN A CASE OF JUMPING THE SHARK

Independent Senator for South Australia, Nick Xenophon, has accused the poker machine lobby of 'jumping the shark'* with today's launch of their \$20 million advertising campaign.

The Clubs' and Hotels' campaign is aimed at heading off poker machine reforms based on mandatory pre-commitment, which will enable players to have the power to decide the maximum amount of money they want to lose.

The reforms, part of the agreement between Prime Minister Julia Gillard and Independent MP Andrew Wilkie to allow the formation of a minority Labor Government, are aimed at dramatically reducing pokies problem gambling.

According to research by the Productivity Commission, 600,000 Australians play the pokies weekly, with approximately 100,000 of those having a significant gambling problem and 200,000 others already showing signs of developing a full-blown addiction.

Problem gamblers make up 40 percent of the annual \$12 billion losses on pokies, with each problem gambler impacting, on average, the lives of 7 others.

Senator Xenophon, who has worked closely with Mr Wilkie on the reforms, says the campaign is "built on a foundation of quick sand" because;

- It's just plain wrong to say that a licence will be needed to gamble; and,
- The reforms have always anticipated a 2-tiered system where high-intensity, high-impact (and high-harm) machines, where thousands of dollars can be lost in an hour, will require mandatory pre-commitment systems. Low intensity, much safer machines, where losses are more in line with the amount spent at a night at the movies, won't need pre-commitment technology.

Further, Senator Xenophon says the Joint Parliamentary Committee into Gambling Reform isn't due to report until the end of April, "so this greedy, self-interested lobby has really jumped the shark".

"The industry once accused me of jumping the shark," Nick said. "Well, it seems this mob has written the rule book on how to do it".

"How can thy justify spending \$20 million – which exceeds the amount spent on frontline problem gambling services nationally each year – on a campaign based on a lie?"

Senator Xenophon also referred to the TV advertisement being launched today where reference is made to the reforms being 'un-Australian'.

"What's actually 'un-Australian' is for this selfish, self-interested industry to continue to ruin the lives of hundreds of thousands of Australians through their addictive product."

** The term 'jump the shark' was initially used in television (in a Happy Days episode) and is the moment when a brand, idea or organisation strays from the basis of its success in a moment of absurdity to begin a downwards spiral of decline and loss of credibility.*