

POKER MACHINE REFORM: THE HEADLINE FACTS THE CLUBS AND HOTELS DON'T WANT YOU TO KNOW

Briefing sheet from Senator Nick Xenophon

KEY POINTS

- 40 percent of losses on poker machines come from problem gamblers. (Source: Productivity Commission)
- Poker machines are the second highest cause of crime in the community after the illegal drug trade. (Source: Victorian Government study)
- In its own submission to the Productivity Commission, the Clubs admitted to reaping \$800 million a year from problem gamblers – that is people who shouldn't even be on their machines. (Note: The PC argues the real figure is probably double that)
- According to the Productivity Commission, the 'community contributions' Clubs make a big deal about are significantly less than the tax breaks they are given and are dwarfed by the amount they get in poker machine losses.

Twin Towns Services Club in Tweed Heads is a typical example.

Last year they received \$36.7 million in revenue from pokies and only donated \$946,000 in cash gifts or services.

And they are meant to be a not-for-profit.

And thanks to a legal loophole the services they can claim as 'community contributions' can be for the exclusive use of club members – this includes things like the buildings, and bars, and beer taps.

- The Productivity Commission concluded in its review of gambling that poker machines are the most dangerous form of gambling and is responsible for the vast majority of problem gamblers.
- The Productivity Commission also reported it was relatively easy to lose up to \$1500 an hour playing a standard poker machine. This is meant to be a recreational activity, but you don't lose \$1500 an hour going to the movies or dinner.

- The Alfred Hospital in Melbourne reported last year that 1 in 5 people who attended its Emergency Department after attempting suicide identified problem gambling as the reason for their suicide attempt.
- Mandatory pre-commitment allows gamblers playing these high intensity machines to choose what they are willing to lose before they start using the machines. It will be a national system to protect all Australians who may become addicted to poker machines.
- The Clubs spuriously claim a mandatory pre-commitment scheme would be an invasion of privacy and track player behaviour. This is false and misleading. The proposed scheme for high intensity machines would not track player spending.

The claim is also hypocritical because Clubs currently track the gambling, eating and drinking habits of more than one and half million members through their loyalty card schemes.