

Australian Churches Gambling Taskforce

MEDIA RELEASE

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CHURCHES WELCOME FURTHER MEASURES TO PROTECT AGAINST POKIES HARM

Australian Churches Gambling Taskforce Chair, Rev Tim Costello today welcomed the release of the Australian Greens' position on poker machine gambling reform.

Rev Costello said limiting all poker machine bets to \$1 would significantly limit the damage experienced by people who are addicted to poker machines.

"This is another important consumer protection measure to wrap around a dangerous product," Rev Costello said.

"There are currently around 200,000 poker machines in Australia, generating average revenue of \$60,000 each. Nearly all of these are high intensity machines.

"Australians spend \$12 billion a year on poker machine gambling. Six hundred thousand people play at least weekly, and of these, 95,000 are addicted to pokies. A further 95,000 are at risk of developing an addiction.

"This is a dangerous product for around a third of regular users.

"In most states a gambler can play maximum lines and maximum credits. That means on high intensity machines it's possible to feed \$15,000 an hour into these machines. Losses average \$1,200 an hour. People addicted to poker machines tend to play maximum credits and maximum lines, averaging losses of around \$21,000 a year. Some lose a lot more.

"Limiting bets to \$1 would see a reduction in the number of lines and the number of credits available to players.

"The Productivity Commission recommends a number of measures to help stem the impact of problem gambling. Limiting access to ATM withdrawals in clubs, \$1 maximum bets and mandatory pre commitment are among those recommendations.

"Mandatory pre commitment measures will, as part of a raft of measures, help Australia's poker machine addicts who are ready to help themselves and prevent many people from developing a problem," Rev Costello said.

Members of the Australian Churches Gambling Taskforce include the heads of Australian Christian Churches and the heads of their social services agencies nationally, united by a commitment to make poker machine gambling safer.

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