



CLUBS VICTORIA INC.

URGENT MEDIA RELEASE

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Proposed new signage regulations will advantage hotels and casinos over community clubs and do nothing for problem gamblers

Leon Wiegard, President of ClubsVIC labelled the government's proposed new limitations on signage as anti-community club and pro hotels and Crown casino.

After the briefing by government on the proposed restrictions, Mr Wiegard said "The proposal specifically disadvantages the community clubs which are invariably situated off the main streets and behind the sportsground or bowling greens which are maintained by the surpluses from the club's trading.

"Pokie pubs, on the other hand, have been chosen to have pokies because of their prime retail positions and the position itself is an advertisement, and Crown casino's logo is totally exempt from the restrictions, and what's more there is absolutely no evidence that any of this will reduce problem gambling.

"We are at a loss to understand why the government would even consider implementing a measure that so obviously and effectively disadvantages the community not-for-profit sector and does nothing to assist problem gambling and everything to assist the pubs and the casino," said Mr Wiegard.

ClubsVIC has consistently advised the government that Victorian clubs are a special case as regards signage. All community clubs, metropolitan and country, suffer from geographic disadvantage vis a vis hotels, and recent GRP research shows that clubs have a lower incidence of problem gamblers. ClubsVIC will continue to make the case for special club exemptions.

"Only 25% of Victorian clubs have gaming machines. Non-gaming clubs do not provide for visitors nor do they have the full range of hospitality products. Does the government expect patrons to **guess** if they are welcome at any particular club" – Mr Wiegard pondered.

"It is essential for the continued viability of clubs that they are able to properly sign-post their location and type of hospitality they offer. Directional signage which is on the club premises is useless, you are allowed to know that the club welcomes when you get there, whereas the hotel on the main street can have a logo on the front wall for all the passing traffic to see, and Crown Casino has no restriction."

"We estimate that one third of our community clubs are already struggling to support the sporting and social facilities that they provide for the community. This could well be a "knock-out blow" for all of them and an enormous free kick to the pubs and casino," Mr Wiegard said.

Clubs have a special role in Victoria. They are the only not-for-profit organisations that provide gaming. Clubs are community owned assets that exist to provide sporting and social infrastructure for all Victorians. Clubs provide the local footy grounds, the golf courses, the bowls and bocce, the ethnic and social activities that allow Victorians to be socially cohesive, fit and healthy citizens. Clubs use the income from their hospitality operations - food beverage **and** gaming - to fund these vitally important facilities that are used by the 2 million Victorians who are part of clubs. Why would the government deliberately disadvantage clubs?

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