



MEDIA RELEASE

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PROBLEM GAMBLING NOT BEING HELPED BY INDUSTRY BASHING

The persistent denigration of the gaming industry by anti-gamblers and critics is not helping to address the issue of problem gambling, says ClubsVIC, the umbrella body for licensed clubs in Victoria.

The most recent negative comments relate in particular to our highly successful self exclusion program. The self exclusion program employs best-practice scientific models to assist those persons who are ready to make a commitment to stop gambling. It has proven to be successful in assisting thousands of individuals.

It is recognised that some people are not ready for self exclusion and for them some other program may be required. But instead of working with the industry to develop that "something else", cynics fail to understand the self exclusion model and are determined to undermine the effectiveness of the program.

Leon Wiegard, President of ClubsVIC, reaffirmed this and commented that the self exclusion program is a SELF commitment made by the individual.

"Self exclusion cannot be an enforced program. Nobody puts down the Quit Campaign because would-be quitters lapse. We know that quitters lapse, just like self excluded individuals may lapse also, but we don't require cigarette retailers to enforce the commitment to quit."

ClubsVIC also contends that it is fatuous to argue that problem gambling in one area will be assisted by moving poker machines to another area, or by the imposition of caps on the numbers of machines. All available data shows that the number of poker machines is irrelevant to the incidence or rates of problem gambling in a particular area.

"Would we reduce bars in certain areas to one beer tap in order to curb the incidence of problem drinking? No, and yet placing caps on the numbers of pokies produces a similar effect," said Mr Wiegard.

The incidence of problem gambling is less than 2%. 511,000 Victorians play the pokies every week, with one million playing occasionally, and the vast majority of them do so with impunity. Venues with poker machines add value to a town in employment, entertainment, diversity, and investment into the community. The best way to maintain this positive effect is to encourage poker machines in clubs.

Mr Wiegard noted that many Victorian communities have benefited greatly from the introduction of poker machines into clubs.

"Clubs are not-for-profit, operated by and on behalf of the club's members and the community, and they provide the sporting and social infrastructure that keeps Victorians active and engaged.

"The focus of clubs is not gaming turnover, but junior footy, bowls, netball, golf, soccer, folk dancing, aged care facilities, and the like. The community is best served by a ubiquitous and diverse network of healthy community clubs with a secure income stream," said Mr Wiegard.

The critics ignore the research into problem gambling and seem bent on bashing the gaming industry, and this often results in an unintended exacerbation of the problem. ClubsVIC has, and will continue, to work with industry groups and the science available to make our gaming product enjoyable and safe.

ENDS - For more information please contact Leon Wiegard, President, on 0418 334 664

ClubsVIC... supporting Victoria's community clubs