



## URGENT MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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### Government's policy disappoints the community clubs

Victoria's community clubs are disappointed with the government's gambling policy released today.

Margaret Kearney, Executive Director of ClubsVIC the umbrella group for the Victorian club network, said today that "the community sector welcomes all efforts to strengthen effective problem gambling strategies like increased funding for services and education. However there is little in the policy that will deliver anything extra for problem gamblers and much that will detract from the state's community clubs.

Despite professing to adopt an "evidence-based approach" to the issue of problem gambling, the government is persisting with the "junk science" that is promoted by gambling abolitionists said Kearney. "Steven Bracks has acknowledged publicly that caps on numbers of machines are ineffective in dealing with problem gambling, but here we go again with caps" she said. "There is no evidence that limiting daily withdrawals from ATMs to \$400 will have any effect on problem gambling. Nor is there any evidence that paying all winnings over \$1000 totally by cheque will **not** have the adverse effect of that no winnings are cashed out when they are over \$1000, and thus ensuring gamblers spend more.

"Recent research found that clubs are more benign providers of gambling than other providers. And not only are clubs less likely to have problem gamblers, but as not-for-profit organisations, **all** the income from gaming in clubs goes directly back into the local community. The state's community clubs provide the sporting and social infrastructure that keeps Victorians engaged and healthy – and in many instances the clubs rely on funding from the gaming machines to provide that infrastructure. There is nothing in this policy that acknowledges the huge contribution that the community clubs make to our society.

In fact, it would appear that the government is contemplating reducing the ability of clubs to continue to make available the netball courts, the footy grounds, the cricket pitches, the soccer fields, the bowling greens, the aged-care facilities, the social assistance etc that clubs presently provide and instead providing only racing facilities.

"While ClubsVIC is generally supportive of the racing clubs, it would be a tragedy if the only type of clubs that have access to gaming income are racing clubs" Kearney said.

ClubsVIC does not support the concept of "destination gambling". It will result in a reduction in the benefits of gaming (ie increased employment, business, local facilities) with no evidence that there will be any decrease in problem gambling." ClubsVIC will be making strong representations in this regard.

*Community clubs care.*

**ENDS**

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