



JOINT MEDIA RELEASE

Embargoed until 12.01am 5 August 2019

No pokies in WA, State Government gambling with public health

Public health professionals and the social services sector have united to urge the WA parliament to not risk voter's health by lifting restrictions on addictive electronic gambling.

Legislation for the sale of the TAB is currently being considered by State Parliament. The Bill will enable the introduction of highly addictive simulated racing machines, known as 'Trackside' into TAB outlets around the State.

In Western Australia, electronic gambling, or poker machines, are currently limited to the State's only casino. This legislative change would open the door for these devices to be installed in suburban Perth and communities across regional and rural Western Australia.

Public Health Association Australia WA Branch President, Hannah Pierce, said the State Government is adamant Trackside isn't like the pokies, but that position is questionable.

"Quite simply, a simulated racing machine is a computerised dog or horse race where the punter can place bets on the pretend race, and the winner is randomly generated by the machine; just like a poker machine - you put your money in and the machine chooses the winner," said Ms Pierce.

"Research continues to demonstrate the toll addictive gaming takes on the physical and mental health of those who gamble, their loved ones and the wider community. Boosting the budget bottom line doesn't justify this game of chance with vulnerable lives in WA."

Anglicare WA CEO Mark Glasson said WA currently has the lowest expenditure on gambling in Australia due to the ban on pokies, and the lowest rates of problematic gamblers seeking financial counselling.

"The system clearly isn't broke, so why risk making Western Australians more vulnerable with what is essentially betting on a cartoon?" asked Mr Glasson.

"Stats show that pokies still remain the most addictive form of gambling across the nation, even with the growth in online gaming. Addiction and financial counselling services in WA are anticipating a massive spike in problem gambling if the restriction is lifted."

WACOSS Policy and Research Leader Chris Twomey said introduction of pokies by stealth will end up costing the community far more in the long run, than the WA Government will make through the sale of the TAB.

"This is incredibly short-term thinking. The State's Budget is now is now back on the road to recovery so there is absolutely no need to hock our future to boost the sale of the TAB," said Mr Twomey



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“Mark McGowan took a strong and principled stand against pokies when he was Racing and Gaming Minister. The Premier needs to consider the harm caused in other states and around the world where these technologies have been introduced.

“‘Trackside’ will cause the same harm here. It’s the introduction of ‘pokies’ in disguise.”

The legislation has already passed the Legislative Assembly and will return to the Legislative Council in coming weeks when Parliament resumes.

A public forum, jointly run by the Public Health Association Australia WA Branch, the Public Health Advocacy Institute of WA, Anglicare WA and WACOSS will be held on **Monday 5 August 2019** to step up pressure on the State Government to amend the legislation and prevent the introduction of pokies to the TAB.

The forum will start at 9am at Anglicare WA, 23 Adelaide Terrace, Perth.

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