

NSW STATE ELECTION 2019

MEETING YOUR LOCAL POLITICIANS TOOLKIT

You can probably tell there is a state election coming up, because there are candidates on nearly every street corner, shopping centre or train station. They are actively trying to talk to as many voters as possible. They may even knock on your door. Candidates, including your local MP if they are running again, are expecting people to come to talk to them about issues of concern. You needn't be shy about this great opportunity for you to ask them to take a stand for gambling reform.

The state election is on March 23. By and large, issues to do with poker machines are a state matter, and sports betting or on-line betting, and advertising, is a federal issue.

This guide is in relation to the NSW State election. Contact info@agr.org.au if you want to ask about the federal election and sports-betting.

STEP ONE: FINDING OUT WHO THE CANDIDATES ARE IN YOUR ELECTORATE

The best thing you can do is try meet candidates in your electorate and tell them that gambling reform is important to you. So, who are they?

1. Find your electorate here

www.elections.nsw.gov.au/Elections/How-voting-works/District-profiles

2. Find the names of the candidates in your electorate here

www.elections.nsw.gov.au/Funding-and-disclosure/public-register-and-lists/Register-of-Candidates/State-Register-of-Candidates

3. Get the contact details of candidates in your electorate by checking the websites of major parties ([Labor](#), [Liberal](#), [Greens](#), [Nationals](#)) googling for Independents or minor parties, or contact us for help - kate@agr.org.au

STEP TWO: MAKING CONTACT

There are several ways you can go about contacting a candidate.

Bumping into one

It's very likely that one or more will pop up in front of you (train station, street corner, shops), so we recommend keeping this guide, our policy summary below or your pre-prepared own questions in your pocket in case of unexpectedly meeting a candidate or MP.

Check what's happening – if they are alone and trying to hand out a lot of leaflets, you won't get much of their attention. If they have helpers around or knock on your door, you can usually count on a really meaningful conversation.

Meet the Candidate Forums

Local interest groups often run Meet the Candidate Forums. If you don't know of any, contact us and we can help track some down. You should check with the organisers about how questions will be handled – if you do get a chance, just ask one very short question to get the maximum number of answers.

Setting up a meeting

Especially in marginal seats, every vote counts, so candidates or even sitting MPs are probably willing to make a time to meet – suggest coffee after they've finished handing out at the station, for instance. MPs will probably agree to a meeting at their electoral office. Emailing to ask for a meeting time is probably the best way to get this to happen.

It can be a good idea to take a friend for support, and as a witness to the conversation.

In writing

If you don't think you'll be in your electorate often, or the candidates are surprisingly elusive, consider an email, or a post on their facebook or twitter feed. Or you could post in a local interest groups feed, and tag them – that means even more people will see your message and their response.

Keep in touch with us at the Alliance. If you have questions or need guidance, contact us for assistance (Kate: 0419481328 kate@agr.org.au or Pepi: 0488151645 pepi@agr.org.au).

**WE'RE REALLY KEEN TO HEAR BACK FROM YOU
IF YOU DO MAKE CONTACT AND GET A RESPONSE**

2019 NEW SOUTH WALES ELECTION POLICY PLATFORM

POLICY TO REDUCE GAMBLING HARM

In NSW we are focussed on reforming the poker machine industry. It is still the largest source of gambling losses, and in fact, the easiest Australian gambling problem to solve. It just needs some political backbone - so this year, why not find out which candidates and political parties have the courage to change some fundamentals? We outline here a few key asks for 2019, but if you have other things you want changed, please include them in your conversations with candidates.

Let us know how you get on by emailing our NSW Campaigner, Kate (kate@agr.org.au). If you'd like some help working out how to approach pollies or candidates, see our Guide, or contact Kate.

If you are concerned about sportsbetting, we'll be running a campaign for the federal election. Contact us for more details via info@agr.org.au

\$1 MAXIMUM BETS

In NSW, you can lose upwards of \$1200 every hour on a poker machine. One very simple way to reduce the harm of financial losses is to minimize the amount that can be lost.

The AGR strongly supports a \$1 bet limit per button push on poker machines.

The 1999 Productivity Commission report investigated bet limits on poker machines to reduce gambling harm. The Productivity Commission found that on average, people gambling at harmful levels staked \$1.62 per button push compared to 57 cents for other gamblers.

On our roads, Australians understand that speed limits save lives. A \$1 bet is a speed limit for machine gambling, preventing poker machines from taking more of people's weekly pay cheques in under an hour.

The Productivity Commission dismissed the argument made by the poker machine industry that a reduction in bet size would result in people harmed by gambling losing the same amount of money by increasing the length of their gambling. The Commission took the view that "while it is likely some gamblers would play for longer, it is improbable that this effect would be so great as to nullify the impact of the reduced bet limit."

BAN LOYALTY PROGRAMS

On February 14 2019, the ABC broke a story that Woolworths owned hotels in NSW had been allegedly providing free alcoholic drinks to people gambling on poker machines. If true, this is completely illegal.

It should also be illegal to provide priority car parking, free soft drinks, meals, coffee, or make staff to go and buy your cigarettes so you stay in front of a poker machine and gamble.

These are called loyalty programs. They encourage people to gamble, and entice them to spend longer at a machine. They are indefensible.

No gambling venue operator will voluntarily give up these enticements. **The next government of NSW must enforce a state-wide ban on loyalty programs in clubs and pubs.**

NO DEALS WITH THE GAMBLING INDUSTRY

The Coalition has already signed a third agreement with the gambling industry, ClubsNSW and AHA on October 13 2018. Every other candidate should put people before pokies and rule out making any agreement or deal with the gambling industry.

ClubsNSW and the AHA have enjoyed eight years of protection from the current government, via a series of agreements. Much of the 'reform' legislation passed last year was to finalise promises made during the 2015 election, irrespective of submissions from citizens.

The 2018 MOU includes, amongst other things, a commitment to locate TAFE campuses and Service NSW kiosks in clubs which will further embed pokie-venues into other structural parts of the NSW social system.

Under current legislation in NSW, a new club in a new housing development can start operations with 150 poker machines - this is a stark indicator of how the Coalition and ALP have bought into the myth that poker machines are indispensable for a club business plan. This must end. This loophole must be closed, but in the new MOU, the government is keen to see more new clubs open.

The current MOU explicitly commits to maintaining the current regulatory regime. That's the last thing we need - we need significant change in laws and regulations.

GIVE POWER BACK TO THE PEOPLE

In NSW, local communities have no say over the number of poker machines or their location, in any council area. The Independent Liquor and Gaming Authority decides all applications. Council can make submissions, but ILGA is not obliged to consider them. Councils do not have an automatic right to appeal, as they do in Victoria.

Only one council area has poker machines numbers capped. All others can potentially have new machines brought in. For around 50% of NSW, venue owners do not have to undertake any community consultation when applying for additional machines. They do not have to prove a net benefit to the community - just that they are giving some money to someone in the local area.

Councils represent their local communities. They should have a role in the decisions about the number and placement of poker machines. We want changes to state planning and gambling laws to allow Councils to be part of the decision making, and to designate no-pokie zones in their local areas.

For more information, contact our NSW campaigner, Kate da Costa, kate@agr.org.au or 0419481328