

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.

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 **0419 481 328**
