



Media Release

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Gambling initiatives welcomed, but effectiveness uncertain

The Tasmanian Council of Social Service today welcomed the initiatives announced by the Treasurer to tackle problem gambling, but was concerned that the response was not comprehensive and did not include a strategy to reduce the number of gaming machines.

“The focus on consumer protection is potentially a positive step forward in reducing the negative impact of gaming machines in Tasmania,” said TasCOSS CEO Tom Muller.

“The initiatives announced today are good, but until we have seen the detail – particularly in relation to the content of the mandatory code, how the code will be enforced and the extent of restrictions – it is too early to judge how successful the initiatives will be.”

“TasCOSS is also concerned that the Treasurer seems to have cherry-picked different initiatives. The Tasmanian Gaming Commission clearly advised that any response, particularly to gaming machines, needed to be comprehensive otherwise it would not work”.

TasCOSS is also calling on the Treasurer to clarify whether the mandatory codes and restrictions will apply across all venues and fix existing anomalies between pubs and casinos. The biggest existing anomaly is the fact that casinos are allowed gaming machines that have note acceptors.

“Unless existing anomalies are fixed, and the measures apply across all venues, today’s announcement will not make a significant difference in minimising the harm of gaming”.

The gambling social and economic impact study released last year showed:

- The main source of problem gambling comes from poker machines in hotels, clubs and casinos.
- One third of all gaming machines are located in two casinos. The report also highlighted that gambling machines now account for 92% of the total expenditure in Tasmania’s two casinos – this is a massive change from 8% in 1997/98;
- There is a disproportionate concentration of machines in lower socio-economic areas; and
- That 10% of gaming machine users account for 40% of gaming machine turnover.

Given these facts TasCOSS is disappointed that there is no overall strategy to reduce the number of gaming machines.

Tom Muller is available for interview on 6231 0755 or 0448 310 043