# Changes to Pokies and Gaming Regulation Will Hurt Our Clubs

## Our clubs take problem gambling seriously

For the majority of Australians, gambling is an occasional and recreational pursuit that is enjoyed responsibly. However, *[REDACTED]* recognises that problem gambling is a serious issue for a small number of people. For these people, and their families, excessive gambling can result in serious harms.

Our clubs are at the forefront of developing strategies and programs that deal specifically with the issue of destructive gambling. We are committed to operating safe gambling environments and effective harm minimisation practices.

That’s why your local club offers access to 24/7 counselling. It’s why we have introduced bans on betting with credit cards and why we have trained our staff in responsible gambling practices.

Many of these measures were developed with significant input from some of Australia’s foremost problem gambling experts and the Australian Institute for Gambling Research.

## We are getting the balance right

The prevalence of problem gambling has fallen in every state and territory over the last ten years. We believe that this is because current regulations in partnership with programs already implemented by industry gets the balance right.

Years of research tells us that problem gambling is a complex issue with no ‚ “quick fix” or "silver bullet" solutions. Simplistic, one-size fits all solutions regularly put forward by the anti-gambling lobby are likely to bankrupt clubs and prohibit adults from engaging in a legitimate form of entertainment.

5 million individuals play the pokies annually in Australia. Of these only 1.2% or 60, 000 are problem gamblers. Proportionally, this is not a huge number: there are 4 million smokers and 9.4 million overweight people in Australia. We believe that the needs of these problem gamblers can be better met with targeted policy solutions and counselling.

Blanket policies that do not specifically target problem gambling are an infringement on the rights of adult Australians who gamble recreationally. Adults in a free society should be free to spend their money as they please, without draconian restrictions.

*[REDACTED]* supports credible and evidence-based measures that effectively address problem gambling and rejects unreasonable and untested measures put forward by people interested only in stopping gambling for ideological purposes. Any government response should be evidence-based, proportionate and not treat all players as problem gamblers.

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Our community grants program provides an important source of funding for local sporting groups and community projects

## Over-regulation will harm our communities

While we must consider the needs of the small percentage of Australians who gamble more than they can afford, the impact of any measures on the majority of Australians who are recreational gamblers equally cannot be ignored. Imposing restrictions that also target recreational or casual gamblers will lead to a major reduction in revenue for Australia’s clubs.

Australian clubs support over 172,000 jobs and make an economic contribution valued at over $8.3 billion. Academic research has shown that clubs have an important role in helping older people maintain social connections at a time of decreasing social participation for many. Pubs and clubs sponsor kids sporting teams, they subsidise the costs of playing sport and provide transport for kids to get to their games.

The funds derived from poker machines provide significant social and economic benefits back to the community in terms of entertainment, employment, tax revenue and financial support of sporting and community groups including billions of dollars in sporting equipment and infrastructure.

We believe that the current model of sensibly regulated, community-owned gambling is the best method for the delivery of safe and responsible gambling products that maximises the benefit to the community.