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CASE FOR \$1 MAX BET DOESN'T STACK UP

Clubs Australia has received commitments in writing from both major parties that they are committed to working in Government with state governments and stakeholders including the Australian club industry to ensure that Australians who wish to gamble responsibly are able to continue doing so.

Executive Director of Clubs Australia Anthony Ball said both parties wrote to the club industry prior to the federal election but after Julia Gillard was elected Prime Minister.

“Recent media speculation that either side would consider forcing upon all Australians a \$1 max bet on poker machines is inconsistent with the commitments made to us by the Government and Opposition.

“Both parties are well aware that the rate of problem gambling has been halved in Australia over the past decade, and now stands at less than half of one percent of all adults. This success doesn't suit the political ambitions of the anti-gambling lobby and is sadly never acknowledged,” he said.

Two months ago the Federal Government committed itself to working with state governments and industry to introduce pre-commitment technology by 2016. This fact has been ignored by Andrew Wilkie as he makes a case for a \$1 max bet on poker machines.

Both Mr Wilkie and Senator Nick Xenophon have claimed in recent days that the social harm of problem gambling outweighs any economic good that comes from gambling.

The Productivity Commission Report into Gambling states that the overall net benefit (of gambling) ranged between \$3.7 and \$11.1 billion annually. That is, the community is up to \$11 billion better off a year thanks to gambling even after the social cost of problem gambling is considered.

Anthony Ball said a \$1 max bet will cost state governments well over half a billion dollars in tax each year and reduce the incomes of clubs and hotels by \$2 billion. He also stated that independent research by the University of Sydney had shown that just 7.5% of problem gamblers bet more than \$1 per play on a poker machine.

“Clubs Australia is fully supportive of harm minimisation measures that are tested, proven and don't punish responsible gamblers. The \$1 max bet idea doesn't tick any of those boxes.

“There are more than 10 million club members in Australia. That is a tremendous indicator of the respect and appeal clubs have among the community. Someone like Stephen Mayne on the other hand, who ran a high profile Senate ticket backing a \$1 max bet limit on poker machines, received just 4,000 votes.

“At a time when crucial discussions are occurring regarding who should be Australia's next Prime Minister, Andrew Wilkie is telling our leaders that a person could lose \$15,000 in one hour on one machine. The Productivity Commission stated that the most a person could lose in an hour is \$1,200, and even this requires they bet the maximum \$10 each time and that they play a new game every 3 seconds, and never win even one dollar.

“Andrew Wilkie needs to stop speaking and start reading, because he clearly hasn't bothered to read the most exhaustive report on problem gambling in Australian history,” Anthony Ball said.

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Letters from the ALP and Coalition can be sourced at www.clubsnsw.com.au