



Dr Chris Burns
MINISTER FOR RACING, GAMING & LICENSING

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HOSPITALITY AND GAMING REFORMS FOR BETTER FUTURE

Minister for Racing, Gaming and Licensing Dr Chris Burns has today announced a significant package of reforms to the Territory's hospitality and gaming industries.

Dr Burns said the reforms would strengthen regulations around smoking, poker machines and alcohol.

"This is the single most comprehensive package of reform in our hospitality and gaming industries to provide a healthier, safer community," Dr Burns said.

"This is about delivering a better future for Territory families."

Dr Burns said the Government's package will:

- ban smoking in pubs and clubs;
- cap the number of pokies and reduce Government revenue from the machines;
- begin process of alcohol licence buybacks; and
- strengthen the Alcohol Courts.

Smoking

Smoking will be banned in pubs and clubs throughout the Northern Territory from 2 January 2010.

"Banning smoking in pubs and clubs will make it more enjoyable for everyone to have a night out with friends," said Dr Burns.

"The Territory Government has worked closely with the AHA in reaching this decision, and we will continue to support businesses as they prepare to become smoke-free."

Other measures to be introduced include:

- \$200 annual tobacco retailers licence fee; and
- ban on display and promotion of tobacco products at points of sale.

Gaming – Poker Machines

Dr Burns said the Government's comprehensive package would cap the number of poker machines in the community.

"Pokies can have a devastating impact on the lives of problem gamblers and their families," he said.



“The Licensing Commissioner, Richard O’Sullivan, has called for a cap on the number of poker machines – and we’ve listened.

“The number of pokies in our pubs and clubs will be capped – no more poker machine licences will be issued, removing about 1000 potential machines from the community.

“Similar to other States, licences for each machine will need to be purchased and will only come from within the existing pool.

“We will reduce Government’s income from poker machines as part of our plan to reduce Government’s reliance on gaming revenue – a move that is happening across Australia.

The reforms will:

- cap the number of pokies in the Territory at 1190, removing about 1000 potential poker machines from the community;
- maintain the current cap on pokies in pubs at 10, and 45 in clubs;
- raise the tax threshold on poker machines for pubs and clubs, reducing Government’s revenue from the machines by \$5.3 million to \$23.7 million, an 18% decrease; and
- allow pubs and clubs to trade poker machines, within the set cap, to provide an income stream for smaller businesses.

Alcohol

“We’ve done a lot to tackle alcohol abuse and its effects, including the declaration of dry towns and dry areas, the introduction of an electronic ID system for take away alcohol, and more police on the street,” said Dr Burns.

“We need to do more – and we will.

“The Government will begin the process to buy back liquor licences across the Northern Territory, further reducing the supply of alcohol available to problem drinkers.”

The Government will work in consultation with key stakeholders in developing the criteria and process for the buy back of alcohol licences.

Dr Burns said the Government will also strengthen the powers of the Alcohol Court to get more people into treatment.

Police and FACS officers will have power to refer people who repeatedly go through sobering up shelters and protective custody, but who have not committed a criminal offence, to the Alcohol Court for treatment.

“Too much of the Territory’s crime and violence is related to alcohol abuse – these reforms will help get more problem drinkers into treatment before crimes happen,” said Dr Burns.

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