



Media release

Friday, 15 December 2017

AMA supports move to remove pokies from Tasmanian pubs and clubs

AMA Tasmania has welcomed Labor's policy to remove poker machines in Tasmania's pubs and clubs, praising the position as bold and courageous.

AMA Tasmania President Dr Stuart Day said from a health perspective, AMA Tasmania supports any reduction of poker machines in the state.

"Behavioural addictions are serious health conditions, with high mortality and disability," Dr Day said.

"This type of addiction typically stimulates dopamine in a similar way to addictive substances, such as cocaine or nicotine.

"These 'rewarding effects' positively reinforce use, and increase the likelihood of subsequent activity.

"Substance dependence and behavioural addictions are chronic brain diseases, and people affected by them should be treated like any other patient with a serious illness.

"Those affected by dependence and addictions are also more likely to have physical and mental health concerns as well as a heightened risk of suicide, and their finances, careers, education, and personal relationships can be severely disrupted.

Dr Day said left unaddressed, the broader community impacts included reduced employment and productivity, increased health care costs, reliance on social welfare, increased criminal activity, and higher rates of incarceration.

"Therefore, we see this thoughtful policy as an overarching harm minimisation strategy, which will assist in alleviating pressure on the already overstretched health care system in our state," he said.

"As poker machines account for around 80 per cent of problem gambling and are also associated with the greatest level of harm, AMA Tasmania fully supports the move to put the spotlight on this form of gambling in the first instance.

"This is a well-rounded policy, also factoring in the wellbeing of hospitality staff and operators, providing a generous transition period showing their needs, income and mental health have also been considered within the development of this policy.

"We are also calling on the Commonwealth Government to take a lead role in providing incentives that support state and territory governments to reduce their dependence on revenue from gambling."



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Media contact: Georgi Wicks, Font PR, 0409 709 262