

# THE POKIES PLAY YOU

## Tim Costello welcomes pokies reform in SA, Tasmania

Wednesday, February 21, 2018

The Alliance for Gambling Reform's spokesman and director Tim Costello today completed a three day tour of South Australia and Tasmania supporting long-overdue pokies reform required to end Australia's notorious status as the [world's most gambling addicted](#) nation.

Speaking in Launceston today, Mr Costello backed the proposal to remove pokies from Tasmanian pubs and clubs in 2023, a position The Alliance [first took](#) when Tasmanian Labor announced its [trail-blazing policy](#) on December 13 last year.

Mr Costello engaged in a 30 minute debate (listen to [full 19 minutes conducted on air](#)) with Tasmania's most pro-pokies journalist, Grant Broadcasting's Northern Tasmania presenter [Brian Carlton](#), this morning and made the following points:

# As the recent [Australia Institute study](#) revealed, Australia has 76% of the world's pokies in pubs and clubs as most countries recognise the danger of mixing alcohol with addictive pokies at venues which are not exclusively focused on gambling services;

# Removing pokies from pubs and clubs will create jobs because pokies are a job-killer requiring just 3 jobs for each \$1 million of community spending, compared with 20 jobs for \$1 million of spending in a restaurant or cafe.

# Australia's [biggest pokies operator](#) Woolworths – which pockets almost \$2 billion of the \$13 billion in national pokies losses - is poised to swoop on more Tasmanian venues if the Government introduces their venue-owned model which would deliver a valuation windfall of between \$150 million and \$250 million to the existing venues when their share of pokies profits rise from 30% to 50%.

# Mainland interests such as Federal Group, the AHA and Clubs NSW, supported by the likes Sydney-raised ex 2GB presenter [Brian Carlton](#), are attempting to influence the election with big money advertising, a deluge of political donations and misleading claims;

# There are 400 gambling-related suicides in Australia each year and Rev Costello has done many funerals for those entrapped in a gambling addiction or suffering mental health issues associated with severe gambling harm;

# When it comes to political capture, the pokies industry is Australia's blind spot for out-sized influence, just like the NRA in the United States. The US has the world's worst gun-related crime and Australia's has the world's worst per capita gambling losses.

Mr Costello attended the [pokies forum](#) hosted by *The Advocate* newspaper in Ulverstone on Tuesday night and held a press conference in Launceston this morning where he called on Premier Will Hodgman to formally withdraw and apologise for promoting the industry scare campaign claiming 5000 pokies jobs were at risk.

“*The Conversation’s* Fact Check service has [today declared](#) this jobs claim is a serious exaggeration and Mr Hodgman and his Treasurer Peter Gutwein should publically accept they were misleading Tasmanians,” Mr Costello said.

“Indeed, there is a strong argument that Mr Gutwein, a former publican, should not have responsibility for gaming given the obvious conflict of interest as the Treasurer looking to maximise state revenue.”

Mr Costello also welcomed [today’s release](#) of full 2015-16 venue loss data by Tasmanian independent Federal MP Andrew Wilkie and called on South Australia’s Independent Gambling Regulator to do likewise.

On Monday, Mr Costello was in Adelaide for the launch of the [SA Best pokies policy](#) which proposes significant reforms such as \$1 maximum bets, a 50% cut in hotel pokies numbers and conversion of perpetual licences to 7 years with a view to complete removal in 2026.

“The SA Best policy is evidenced based, and would result in a very large reduction in gambling harm from poker machines and online gambling,” Mr Costello said. “Policies such as \$1 bets and removing EFTPOS machines from venues would have an immediate reduction in gambling harm and set an example for NSW and Victoria where machine numbers are much larger and these policies urgently needed.”

“The shift from perpetual licences to a 7 year license is significant. Perpetual licenses prevent the community from having a say about how many licences there should be, and who can hold them. The policy explicitly requires any new licences to go to a Parliamentary vote and is designed to make this an election issue in 2022, giving South Australians the option of not creating any new licences for pubs and clubs.”

Mr Costello also welcomed the Greens policy in both Tasmania and South Australia which supports the complete removal of pokies from pubs and clubs within 5 years.

The Alliance has today released [this policy update](#) focusing on South Australia, which will be updated when the Liberal and Labor parties belatedly release their gambling policies.

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