

# THE POKIES PLAY YOU

## NSW falls further into the pokies sewer

Tuesday, June 20, 2017

The Alliance for Gambling Reform today expressed dismay with the forecasts in the NSW Budget showing substantial increases in citizen losses from addictive poker machines.

Whilst racing revenues are forecast to plunge from \$134 million in 2015-16 to just \$65 million in 2020-21, the combined government take from pokies in gambling clubs and pubs will soar from \$1.455 billion in 2015-16 to a record \$1.777 billion – a jump of 22% or \$322 million.

The Alliance's NSW spokesperson, Allison Keogh, who grew up in household impacted by gambling harm, said the NSW Government is failing to protect ordinary people.

"NSW is already the most pokies-soaked state in Australia, so to forecast above-inflation annual increases in losses from these addictive machines is nothing short of state-sponsored abuse," Ms Keogh said. "We don't push addictive cigarettes to get revenue, so both sides of NSW politics need to break their addiction to pokies revenue and escape the capture of the pokies industry with its dangerous products and influence-peddling tactics."

The Alliance is particularly concerned by the growth in harm throughout NSW hotels with government revenue from pubs predicted to soar from \$680 million in 2015-16 to \$893 million in 2020-21 – a rise of 31.3% in just 5 years.

The projected 5.1% annual compound growth in pokies revenue from pubs means pubs are now predicted to become more lucrative to the government than clubs for the first time in 2020-21 (\$884m vs \$893m).

"The growth in hotel losses is the most concerning development as ruthless operators like Woolworths increase their marketing programs to draw in more vulnerable people," Ms Keogh said. "Only this week in the Victorian Civil and Administrative Appeals tribunal, a Woolworths executive admitted their venues still offer free meals to kids, alcohol service at the machines and hotels which are deliberately designed to minimise separation of the pokies areas from other parts of the hotel."

Ms Keogh said that with NSW Treasurer Damian Perrottet claiming the state's finances are "the envy of the western world", surely now is the time to commence the long overdue process of reducing the state's embarrassing and dangerous gambling dependency.

"The property boom and asset sales have opened the window for NSW to introduce a raft of meaningful reforms such as \$1 maximum bets and slower spin rates to makes the state's 95,000 pokies less dangerous and addictive," Ms Keogh said.

The full budget forecast for gambling revenues are available on page 7 of the revenue section of the budget papers: <https://www.budget.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/budget-2017-06/5.%20Revenue.pdf>

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