

THE POKIES PLAY YOU

MEDIA ALERT – WOOLWORTHS AGM TODAY AS DAMNING DATA RELEASED

Thursday, November 23, 2017

The Alliance for Gambling Reform will be asking the tough questions at today's Woolworths AGM in Melbourne after revealing that Australia's biggest pokies operator is keeping 51 of its 81 Victorian pokies venues open the maximum 20 hours a day, seven days a week.

WHAT: Woolworths AGM with former gamblers and reformers asking the hard questions!

WHERE: AGM starts at South Wharf Convention Centre at 10am (see [notice of meeting](#)). Alliance personnel will be available for media and distributing materials from 9.30am.

WHO: Woolworths board candidate Dr Susan Rennie, Stephen Mayne and Anna Bardsley, who challenged James Packer at the recent Crown AGM, will all be asking questions.

Alliance director and Woolworths board candidate Dr Susan Rennie met with Woolworths chairman Gordon Cairns for 45 minutes yesterday, outlining our concerns about the enormous harm caused by the [\\$669 million](#) which was lost by Victorians on Woolworths poker machines last year. See more information [here](#).

Dr Rennie was accompanied to yesterday's meeting with chair Cairns by the sibling of a now deceased Woolworths customer who appears to have lost more than \$1 million at the Blackburn Hotel, a Woolworths-owned pokies venue which is open from 9am until 5am 7 days a week.

It is not possible to say for sure, but this particular victim could potentially be the most lucrative individual Woolworths pokies customer over its 12 year run as Australia's biggest pokies operator.

The family has been seriously impacted by this sustained pokies addiction and doesn't wish to be identified but Dr Rennie will produce hundreds of pages of bank statements from this particular victim at the Woolworths AGM today. An example can be seen [here](#).

The sad story of the decade-plus spree at the Blackburn Hotel highlights two key areas of amendments which The Alliance believes should be addressed when new poker machine legislation goes before the Victorian upper house next week. See full background on the legislation [here](#).

The first is the ridiculously lax system which allows Victoria's 500 pokies venues to trade 20 hours a day, 7 days a week – something the most ruthless operator Woolworths takes full advantage of as it soaks up 25% of the \$2.61 billion lost on the pokies (excluding Crown) each year.

The second is the government's proposed \$500 limit on withdrawals at venues in any 24 hours period. The Blackburn Hotel bank records show how easy access to cash can quickly see a vulnerable person with an addiction lose hundreds of thousands of dollars. The limit should be \$200, just like in Tasmania.

The Alliance will be distributing [this flyer](#) to Woolworths shareholders today. It includes a full list of the 51 Victorian venues which Woolworths operates 20 hours a day, 7 days a week. Media who are unable to attend the AGM can follow the [live webcast](#).

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