

THE POKIES PLAY YOU

Mayors launch biggest local government push yet for gambling reform

Tuesday, July 24, 2018

Mayors and councillors from six of Victoria's major metropolitan councils today joined with Tim Costello to publicly launch The Alliance for Gambling Reform's [2018 election platform](#) on the steps of State Parliament.

Moreland mayor John Kavanagh, Whittlesea mayor Kris Pavlidis, Darebin mayor Kim le Cerf, Yarra Acting Mayor Misha Coleman, Hume councillor Joseph Haweil and Greater Dandenong councillor Matthew Kirwan unfurled a banner "Councils Unite For Pokies Reform" and called on all political parties to embrace reform.

The Alliance's [2018 election platform](#) includes the following reforms aimed at reducing gambling harm:

- # maximum \$1 bets as recommended by the Productivity Commission and supported by Coles
- # reducing maximum venue operating hours from 20 hours a day to 14
- # reducing the maximum daily cash withdrawal from \$500 to \$200
- # Strengthening the duty of care for venues and staff to prevent customer harm
- # Maintaining the 50-50 split between clubs and pubs and retiring surplus club entitlements

With the state election exactly four months away, Alliance director and spokesman Tim Costello welcomed the unprecedented commitment of Victoria's local government leaders to addressing Australia's world record levels of gambling harm.

"Councils such as Moreland, Darebin, Whittlesea, Yarra, Hume, Brimbank and Greater Dandenong are at the coal face of gambling harm and I sincerely welcome the commitment of their mayors and councillors to the cause of fixing this blight on Australian society," Mr Costello said.

"A record 18 Victorian councils have signed up to financially support The Alliance in 2018-19, up from 12 in 2016-17, and we are all committed to ensuring the next election delivers real reform."

Moreland mayor John Kavanagh thanked his fellow mayors for joining colleagues on the steps of State Parliament and showing passion and commitment on the issue of reducing gambling harm.

"As Mayors of some of Melbourne's biggest councils we say enough is enough," mayor Kavanagh said. "This is a crisis and we are here to make sure this will be crucial state election issue."

"Our councils are dealing with the dire consequences of pokies. As community leaders we are standing together to make sure pokies reform is a key state election issue."

"We call on the State Government and opposition parties to commit to \$1 maximum bets, clamp down on losses disguised as wins, reduce venue operating hours and ensure venues and staff have a greater responsibility to protect customers from harm."

Mr Costello said it is time for the Victorian Parliament to revisit the 2017 pokies legislation which has caused a 6% jump in monthly poker machine losses since December 2017.

"This coming Friday (July 27) will see the release of the annual venue loss figures but we already know after 11 months that 2017-18 will deliver the biggest jump in Victorian pokies losses for a decade," Mr Costello said. (See more in [latest Alliance newsletter](#))

"We need urgent reform to prevent the needless suicides, family violence, bankruptcy and fraud which flows when \$2.7 billion a year is ripped from the community through addictive poker machines in 470 suburban pubs and clubs."

"Successive Victorian Governments have been intimidated by a ruthless industry and become reliant on the easy money of gambling taxes. This has got to change."

"Australians suffer the greatest per capita gambling losses of any people on earth and we are not going to tolerate national annual gambling losses of \$25 billion a year anymore, including \$13 billion lost on poker machines."

The Alliance campaign for the 2018-19 year is being supported by a record number of Victorian councils including Banyule, Brimbank, Darebin, Glen Eira, Greater Dandenong, Hobsons Bay, Hume, Kingston, Knox, Maribyrnong, Melbourne, Mitchell, Monash, Moreland, Mornington Peninsula, Whittlesea, Wyndham and Yarra.

EXAMPLES OF COUNCIL ACTION TO FIGHT THE SCOURGE OF POKIES

City of Whittlesea recently launched its ["Pokies Play Whittlesea"](#) campaign and has erected 31 billboards across its municipality amidst a suite of measures designed to raise community awareness about gambling harm ahead of the November 24 election.

City of Moreland had a [Supreme Court victory](#) over the Glenroy RSL, preventing it from installing 11 new machines in an area already suffering above average rates of gambling harm.

City of Darebin [proposed a motion](#) to the MAV State Council calling on Vision Super to investigate divesting its shares in Woolworths, Victoria's biggest pokies operator.

City of Wyndham recently approved this [tough new gambling policy](#) which is one of the strongest in Australia in ensuring council in no way supports or promotes the gambling industry.

City of Yarra recently passed a trail-blazing resolution (see [p13 of these minutes](#) from July 3 council meeting) commissioning a report into the valuations and rates payable by its 8 poker machine venues, opening a new front exploring the issue of whether the gambling industry is failing to pay its fair share of rates.

For further information

Stephen Mayne: stephen@agr.org.au 0412 106 241