

THE POKIES PLAY YOU

Victorian pokies losses crack \$2 billion after 9 months for first time

Friday, October 26, 2018

The Alliance for Gambling Reform today revealed that the Victorian Government has quietly released the details of who is paying \$1.2 billion in licence fees for new 20 year pokies licences as new figures released today show Victorians suffered their highest ever pokies losses in the month of September.

The previous worst September loss of \$224.75 million in 2017 was surpassed with a loss of \$229.4 million in September 2018, according to [data released this morning](#) by the VCGLR.

This means Victorian pokies losses for the first 9 months of the year cracked \$2 billion for the first time and have soared by \$98 million or 5.1% for the year to hit \$2038 million. The calendar 2018 loss is now expected to be a record of almost \$2.8 billion.

The latest disturbing data comes as both major parties attempt to hide from the gambling debate during the current Victorian election campaign and the Government has quietly released the full list of [27,310 20 year pokies entitlements](#) which have been sold for \$1.2 billion.

There are currently [26,559 pokies entitlements](#) allocated to 500 specific Victorian venues but the government has sold 27,310 entitlements for new 20 year licences which will run from August 2022 until 2042.

Many communities, particularly those operating below municipal caps, are now facing an increase in pokies numbers over the coming years, particularly after the government controversially re-allocated [414 lapsed club entitlements](#) to the more aggressive hotels sector.

Councils and communities will spend the next few days assessing the data to establish which venues (ie RSLs, racing clubs, AFL clubs, Woolworths etc) have bought additional entitlements. For instance, [the figures](#) show Victoria's biggest pokies operator, Woolworths, has maintained its existing 4690 entitlements, for which it will pay more than \$300 million to the Victorian Government

With all this [new information](#) coming into the public arena, it is particularly disappointing that Gaming Minister Marlene Kairouz and her shadow Danny O'Brien have both declared they are unavailable at any time to participate in a gambling policy forum.

Alliance for Gambling Reform director and spokesman Tim Costello called on the major parties to face up to Australia's world record levels of gambling harm and at least have the decency to unveil policies on how they intend to address this problem and debate the issue.

"The refusal to debate gambling policy is in stark contrast to previous elections such as in 2006 when Michael O'Brien debated then Labor Gambling Minister Tony Robinson and in 2014 when

Liberal spokesman Ed O’Donoghue participated in a debate, despite then Labor spokesman Martin Pakula pulling out at the last minute,” Mr Costello said.

“This is the second straight Victorian election campaign where Labor has refused to participate in a gambling debate and the Coalition has clearly regressed as well to a Bipartisan position of hiding from the shameful harm they are causing.”

“The Greens have laid the down the gauntlet with a proposal to phase out pokies from pubs and clubs by 2028 and it is now up to the major parties to respond.”

Mr Costello said the \$98 million increase in losses so far this year highlighted the need for all sides of politics to make serious election commitments to reduce Victoria’s world record levels of gambling harm.

“Daniel Andrews and Matthew Guy should be ashamed of themselves for working together to increase losses through new legislation last year at a time when the community is calling for political leaders to tackle Australia’s world record levels of gambling losses,” Mr Costello said.

“It is not too late for either political party to commit to reforms such as \$1 maximum bets, reduced operating hours and less addictive machine design, but the major parties should at least be prepared to talk about this issue.”

Monthly losses	2017 (\$m)	2018	Numeric Change	Per cent Change
Jan	\$209.4	\$221.7	\$12.3m	5.9
Feb	\$193.6	\$203.5	\$9.9m	5.1
Mar	\$213.2	\$227.3	\$14.1m	6.6
April	\$210.5	\$220.5	\$9.9m	4.7
May	\$212.4	\$227.2	\$14.8m	7.0
June	\$212.2	\$223.3	\$11.1m	5.2
July	\$230.1	\$239.0	\$8.9m	3.9
August	\$233.9	\$246.2	\$12.3m	5.3
September	\$224.7	\$229.4	\$4.65m	2.1
Year to date	\$1,939.9m	\$2038.1	\$98m	5.1

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