

THE POKIES PLAY YOU

Victory in Glenroy battle as RSL pokies divestment campaign flies

Tuesday, April 23, 2019

The Alliance for Gambling Reform today welcomed [the campaign](#) by a group of younger veterans (see [their media statement](#)) for full pokies divestment by the Victorian RSL as the City of Moreland secured a [pivotal VCAT victory](#) which will force the Glenroy RSL to remove 10 of their 50 pokies.

Alliance deputy chair Susan Rennie called for the current board of the Victorian RSL to implement a ceasefire on their push for new poker machine approvals until after the July 4th RSL State Conference has resolved the future direction of the organisation.

“The Alliance applauds the [work of younger veterans](#) such as Lucas Moon, Dave Petersen and Dan Cairnes and call on the incumbent Victorian RSL board to either resign or embrace their reform agenda and come up with a new long term business model which does not rely on predatory poker machines which continue to harm veterans,” Dr Rennie said.

Yesterday’s [publicity in The Age](#) and on [ABC TV’s 7.30 program](#) about the younger veteran insurgency coincides with the conclusion of a 4 year battle between City of Moreland and ANZAC House over 10 extra poker machines at the Glenroy RSL. The Glenroy RSL first applied for the additional pokies in 2015 but after various battles at the VCGLR, VCAT and [in the Supreme Court](#), the push was finally defeated on Thursday when [VCAT emphatically rejected the application](#).

“The 10 additional poker machine were installed by the Glenroy RSL in 2017 after the original VCAT decision but will now have to be removed and potentially sold, which is symbolic of what the wider RSL should now do across Victoria,” Dr Rennie said.

“The Alliance applauds City of Moreland for its dogged protection of the Glenroy community from further gambling harm and also calls for the 10 machines to be immediately removed, ideally before ANZAC Day.”

Alliance personnel visited the Glenroy RSL yesterday and found it was still operating 50 poker machines, in breach of their planning permit to only operate 40. Alliance staff were told they would not be out for two more weeks, based on legal advice from ANZAC House.

Dr Rennie said RSL Victoria has wasted hundreds of thousands of dollars fighting to cause more gambling harm in an already vulnerable Glenroy community when these funds could have been directed to veterans welfare rather than lawyers and gambling consultants.

“It is clear that the RSL Victoria head office has been overly influenced by the gambling industry, including through the inappropriate \$500,000 annual sponsorship from Tabcorp [referenced on 7.30](#) last night,” Dr Rennie said.

“After recent failed attempts to expand its pokies empire it is time for a new board to take charge at ANZAC House and end the pokies push once and for all so that younger veterans can proudly associate with an ethical organisation doing no harm in the community.”

“At the very least the Victorian RSL board should commission a full independent audit of the pokies division so members can be informed when they vote at the July 4 State Council. This review should include an assessment of whether the Victorian RSL does indeed only make \$8 million in profit on the \$260 million in revenue generated at its 52 gaming clubs and whether the RSL has the capacity to pay the estimated \$68 million owed to the State Government in August 2022 for the new 20 year licences.”

RECENT VICTORIAN RSL ATTEMPTS TO INSTALL ADDITIONAL POKER MACHINES

Glenroy RSL: applied in 2015 to expand its poker machines numbers by 10 to 50 and after various skirmishes at council, [the VCGLR](#), VCAT and in the Supreme Court, the application was [finally rejected by VCAT](#) in April 2019 and the 10 additional machines will now have to be removed. City of Moreland suffered \$64.17 million in pokies losses in 2017-18, including \$4.78 million on the 50 machines at the Glenroy RSL.

Dandenong RSL: Applied for an additional 11 machines in 2018 and this was rejected by both council and the VCGLR (see [decision](#)). City of Greater Dandenong suffered \$121.4 million in losses on the pokies in 2017-18, with \$7.65 million of this coming on the existing 63 machines at the Dandenong RSL.

Geelong RSL: council rejected an application for 30 new machines and contested it at the VCGLR which [approved the machines](#) in December 2018. City of Greater Geelong suffered record pokies losses of \$117.5 million in 2017-18, and the Geelong RSL contributed \$3.37 million from its existing 43 pokies, which is now set to rise.

Altona RSL: council rejected the application for an extra 22 pokies in 2018 & the application was [refused by the VCGLR](#). City of Hobson Bay suffered \$47.4 million in pokies losses in 2017-18, with \$3.59 million of this coming from the existing 58 pokies at the Altona RSL.

Darebin RSL: applied for an additional 15 pokies in 2017-18. A planning permit for the machines was rejected by council, but a licence to operate them was approved by the VCGLR. Both cases were appealed to VCAT and a decision is imminent after a 5 day hearing. Darebin residents lost \$82.1 million on the pokies in 2017-18 and \$4.7 million of this came from the existing 65 pokies at the Darebin RSL.

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