

**NSW 2020/21 BUDGET FAILS AGAIN TO PREVENT OR REDUCE HARM FROM GAMBLING**

The NSW Treasurer has yet again delivered a budget that shows the addiction of state governments to taxes from gambling. The Alliance for Gambling Reform's Chief Advocate, Tim Costello slammed the forecast revenue increases:

"It is shocking that as we are trying to recover from the impact of a pandemic, the government is hoping that even more misery money from gambling losses pours into the Treasury. The updated forecast shows a steady rise over the forward estimates up to a staggering \$3billion in 2023/24.

"The massive increases from hotel poker machines have to be singled out. What information does the Treasurer have that lets him think that pub pokies are going to be draining even more money from NSW residents, accounting for nearly half the taxes from gambling activities in NSW?

"Although the Treasurer claimed gambling taxes fell by \$456m due to the pandemic shutdown, the difference between the 18/19 and 19/20 figures is less than that. And for the 20/21 year, revenue is expected to be higher than ever before - most obviously from the bandits in pubs and clubs across NSW.

The [Budget papers released yesterday](#) (table 4.5; p. 4-16) show that gambling taxes are expected to rise by nearly 9% per annum over the forward estimates, well above the CPI and above the rate of growth of almost all other taxes. The Alliance for Gambling Reform is most concerned about the continuing trend of increased tax revenue from hotel poker machines, now by far the greatest single source of taxes. Just last year, the 2019 forecasts predicted that taxes from pub pokies would crack \$1billion in 2022/23. Despite the pandemic, the new forecast expects that barrier to be broken this financial year, with a massive increase of \$300million. Club poker machine taxes will also increase by \$221million. These figures represent increased losses and increased turnover, at the same time clubs and pubs are telling the government they can't afford the modest self and third party exclusion reforms currently proposed.

The Alliance undertakes a word count check in the budget documents, as a way of testing the government's approach to social issues.

Drought:	2019: 59;	2020: 43
Police:	2019: 22;	2020: 23
Tolls:	2019: 11;	2020: 3
Prevention:	2019: 0;	2020: 1
Addiction:	2019:0;	2020: 0
Gambling Harm:	2019: 0;	2020: 0

"These tax increases are completely inconsistent with the responsibility of a government to reduce and prevent harm. Although these papers reported on the state's tax review, which recommended decreasing the 'reliance on inefficient and harmful taxes', clearly the state government doesn't consider the waste of \$18.7million a day through pokies which underlies the tax revenue as 'inefficient' or 'harmful'. The Minister responsible for gambling needs to explain how his government's attitude to gambling tax addiction is compatible with its strategic goal of zero harm from gambling" Said Tim Costello, Chief Advocate for the Alliance for Gambling Reform.

**Media Contact: Rebecca Thorpe on 0491 209 436 or [rebecca.thorpe@agr.org.au](mailto:rebecca.thorpe@agr.org.au)**