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Nationals selling out the community in favour of Clubs NSW

The Alliance for Gambling Reform is astounded the Nationals in NSW have chosen to side with criminals money laundering by refusing to support a cashless gambling card in the state.

[Yesterday's confirmation](#) that the Nationals' party room unanimously opposed the cashless gambling card spoke volumes about how captured the party was by Clubs NSW, according to Rev Tim Costello, Chief Advocate for the Alliance.

"Money laundering is very much on the agenda nationally, and especially in NSW, after the [Bergin Inquiry](#) into Crown's fitness to hold a casino licence, coupled with the announcement of a Royal Commission into Crown this week," Rev Costello said.

"We've seen video evidence of shopping bags full of cash being laundered at Crown. We know that Crown is not the only place that is happening.

"Every day in poker machine venues around NSW, hundreds of thousands of dollars are put into machines and very quickly cashed out, minus a few dollars, cleaning drug money and other proceeds of crime, not only legitimising crime, but costing forgone tax dollars on other black money."

Rev Costello said the [proposed cashless gambling card](#) that the Nationals rejected in their party room yesterday would go a long way to limiting the laundering of money via poker machines.

"This money laundering method has long been an open secret," he said. "[Austrac knows this](#), and [academic reports](#) highlight poker machines and how effective they are as money laundering tools.

"Why on earth would the Nationals want to reject such a sensible and relatively simple tool to get on top of money laundering and make it that much harder for criminals to operate in our communities?"

"Clubs NSW are notorious for capturing politicians, buying access and influence. We know they were the entity that had the most meetings with Deputy Premier and Nationals Leader John Barilaro during the first eight months of the pandemic, [securing an astonishing 13 meetings in just eight months](#).

"It is not right that an unhealthy industry like gambling has such seemingly easy access to the Deputy Premier of the largest state in Australia, who then sells out the community essentially in favour of money laundering criminals after these meetings.

"This is a fundamental issue of democracy being bought at the expense of the community."

Rev Costello said Mr Barilaro owed the people of NSW an explanation as to why he was ignoring a recommendation from Commissioner Bergin's report.

"Commissioner Bergin called the proposed cashless gambling card 'a powerful mechanism to assist in combating money laundering'," Rev Costello said.

"The card would also have the added benefit of reducing gambling harm, and that is something of tremendous value to our communities.

"There is a myth that pubs and clubs are currently active in ensuring that people who have made the effort to self-exclude from venues actually are prevented from entering. The reality is that every day people who have self-excluded from venues are admitted without any issues.

"[Self-exclusion legislation](#) due to be brought to the NSW Parliament is an important predecessor to this cashless gambling card. It should have the support of the entire Parliament for the simple reason that we all benefit from reduced gambling harm in our communities."

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See [here](#) for a gambling language guide for journalists.