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## Cashless gambling system must be designed in best interests of community

The Alliance for Gambling Reform is looking forward to working with the NSW Government on gambling harm reduction measures as part of a proposed trial of digital wallets for poker machines, effectively announced via the [Sydney Morning Herald](#) this morning.

“We are not opposed to cashless gambling in and of itself. While there are certainly some risks, if the system was designed right it would reduce money laundering and gambling harm simultaneously, which would be a real win for the people of NSW,” said the Alliance for Gambling Reform’s Chief Advocate, the Rev Tim Costello.

“We welcome Minister Dominello’s genuine commitment to gambling reform. We’ve made it clear there are some absolutely essential elements to ensuring the system works to reduce harm and stop money laundering.”

Rev Costello said [elements key for a cashless system](#) to not increase gambling harm included:

1. The system must be universal and compulsory, not on an opt-in basis for the industry or venues
2. The system must be linked to verified ID, and to self-exclusion registers
3. Low load limits are also required to ensure people regularly take breaks from gambling, which is an evidence-based circuit breaker for harm.

The Alliance welcomed an identity-linked system that included data-sharing with the government and commitment to harm minimisation protections, but expressed reservations over some comments made by the industry.

“A cashless system will only work if it is universal. We appreciate this is a trial, but there must be a resolute commitment to moving to compulsory use in future, otherwise it will be ineffective. You can’t stop money laundering or gambling harm if you can continue to use a mix of cash and cashless,” Rev Costello said.

“Clubs NSW, the hotels and all the other groups involved in this are desperate to ensure that ‘tap and go’ cashless gambling comes in, because they know people will lose even more if a new system is designed how they want. Designed poorly, you may as well just set up direct debits to local clubs and pubs and cut out the use of poker machines all together.

“I believe that Minister Dominello is committed to harm minimisation and look forward to working with him to ensure this system is effective, and meets community expectations. The people of NSW deserve a system designed with the needs of the community in mind, not the desires of the gambling industry to ensure their profits are maximised.”

Rev Costello said he would seek assurances that this move did not open the door to “tap and go” gambling, which would be a “nightmare” for people experiencing gambling harm.

“The absolute worst case scenario in dealing with gambling harm would be a direct EFTPOS or ‘tap and go’ system to pay for gambling on poker machines,” Rev Costello said.

“We simply cannot support anything that makes it even easier for people’s lives to be ruined, for families to break-up, for people to end up sleeping in cars --it would be a nightmare. That is the very real danger of a system that is not well-designed, and we have major concerns around that.”

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

Gamblers Helpline 1800 858 858 [gamblershelp.com.au](http://gamblershelp.com.au)

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