

Church and services come out in support of cashless gambling in NSW

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The Moderator of the Uniting Church Synod of NSW and ACT and the CEO and Superintendent of Wesley Mission have today expressed their support towards cashless gambling in NSW.

Rev Simon Hansford and Rev Stu Cameron have met with Rev Tim Costello, Chief Advocate for the Alliance for Gambling Reform, to discuss cashless gambling in NSW and how it could reduce gambling harm and improve the life of our communities.

Rev Hansford said reducing gambling harm continues to be a priority issue of social justice given the considerable number of connections between this major public health issue and many others.

“The significant gambling losses occurring every day in NSW are harming individuals and families throughout our communities,” Rev Hansford said.

“So many issues we face as a community have connections to gambling, including family violence, relationship breakdowns, mental ill-health and homelessness. We want to ensure our communities grow in peace, health and happiness, and reducing gambling harm will be a significant contribution towards this positive growth.”

Wesley Mission is a provider of gambling counselling and legal services, ensuring Stu Cameron has gambling harm as a clear focus of his work.

“A radical change such as this move towards cashless gambling could have a considerable impact on people who are experiencing gambling harm, which is a significant number of people in NSW,” Stu Cameron said.

“Many of the current measures aimed at preventing gambling harm, such as self-exclusion from gaming areas, are ineffective because venues do not take responsibility for the wellbeing of their customers. Cashless gambling reforms must be designed and implemented carefully and properly, with input from people with lived experience and counsellors. Then they could have a real impact on people’s lives as well as preventing money laundering.”

Rev Costello welcomed the support of the Uniting Church and Wesley Mission for the cashless gambling reforms in NSW.

“These are important moves being made in NSW that have repercussions for the whole community, and ideally will set valuable precedents for other states around Australia,” Rev Costello said.

“We suffer far too much gambling harm in this country. We must do everything we can to reduce gambling harm - we will all benefit when that happens. We cannot sustain people losing \$14 billion a year nationally on poker machines. That’s draining our local economies and hurting families.”

Rev Costello said a well-designed cashless gambling system was a winner for the people of NSW.

“It’s imperative this change is done right. If not, we will be opening up to a potentially massive increase in gambling harm,” Rev Costello said. “We simply cannot have a situation where we effectively move to ‘tap and go’ gambling without any measures in place to reduce gambling harm.

“Done right, a move to cashless gambling will all but eliminate money laundering via poker machines and casinos and will also help reduce gambling harm. Done wrong, you may as well set up direct

debits to people's bank accounts and sign over their mortgage to venues. It could be that dangerous.”

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

1. The system must be linked to verified ID, and to self-exclusion registers
2. Low load limits should be in place to ensure people regularly take breaks from gambling, which is an evidence-based circuit breaker for harm
3. Does not allow the use of credit cards for gambling
4. Is universal and compulsory across all NSW gambling venues.

“We have faith this can be done right, and we have come together today to ensure that's the case,” Rev Costello said. “I thank Simon and Stu for their invaluable support for gambling reform.”

Please see media call sheet for information on an event supporting this release.

Media contact: Ashley Donnelly on 0400 509 068 or media@nswact.uca.org.au
See [here](#) for a gambling language guide for journalists.