



Don't gamble with the future

THE gaming industry specialises in fleecing the most vulnerable in our community with its poker machines, but now it appears it also wants us all to fall for the two-card trick on the eve of the Prime Minister's 2020 ideas summit (Ideas brawl at summit, ST, 6/4).

In its letter to Prime Minister Rudd, it claimed I was wrong in stating that the 1999 Productivity Commission report indicated that Australia had almost 21 per cent of the world's poker machines; it says the correct figure is just 2.4 per cent.

The Productivity Commission found Australia has 20.4 per cent of high-intensity machines (poker machines) in the world.

The figure only drops to the figure alleged by the gaming industry (2.6 per cent) if you include Japanese (pachinko) machines that give a toy prize — these are a very low-stakes, low-speed form of game, fundamentally different to poker or slot machines.

The industry is apparently upset at being left out of the ideas summit.

I have had a role in looking over the thousands of people who have been nominated for the summit. There are people from most walks of life, individuals giving to the community, serving those who are most vulnerable and who are desperately keen to see our society change for the better.

Surprisingly, I have not heard the community clamour to include the gaming industry.

What is more surprising about this story is that I knew nothing about it, until I read it in this paper.

Despite the article declaring I was unavailable for comment, neither I nor my office received any call from the reporter. I must have just been unlucky.

TIM COSTELLO, chief executive, World Vision Australia



How much is enough: Poker machines in Australia