



15 November 2010

**VLGA Local Government Working Group On Gambling's 2010  
State Election Platform: addressing the local impacts of  
gambling and supporting communities to have their say**

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**A) 2010 STATE ELECTION PLATFORM**

**Background**

The VLGA's Local Government Working Group On Gambling (LGGWG) acknowledges that the current State Government has already acted on banning ATM's in pokie venues; introduced a Pre-commitment system (albeit one that requires strengthening); and taken other measures to address problem gambling. But there is still much more to be done by the next state government and the parliament.

A key challenge for the next State Government will be to cooperate with the Federal Government on a range of measures to make pokie and online gambling safer. At times this will require the state's legislative and regulatory powers to be used for, rather than frustrate, cooperation between all levels of government.

The LGGWG strongly recommends a multi-party approach to these issues over the next 4 years and beyond.

**Key areas for action**

There are 3 key areas the LGGWG would like all major parties to commit to:

1. Allow communities more say in gambling applications in their local area, and
2. Build local and state government capacities to properly consider and address the social and economic impacts of pokies, and
3. Make pokie and online gambling safer.

**1. Allow communities more say in gambling applications in their local area**

- Return approvals for gaming machines to local government, so that local decisions drive local benefits
- Amend the current '10 pokies per 1,000 adult population ratio' for pokies to a different local area ratio depending on local levels of disadvantage (e.g.

gambling bankruptcies, gambling expenditure, homelessness and other social measures)

- Apply a Gaming Vulnerability Index, so that VCAT and the VCGR take more account of the socio-economic profile of different local areas when deciding applications, and
- Reduce the cost for local governments of appeals at VCAT and the Victorian Commission for Gambling Regulation.

## **2. Build local and state government capacities to properly consider and address the social and economic impacts of pokies**

- Replace the 'no net detriment test' in the Gambling Regulation Act with a 'net benefit test'
- Support the right of local governments to set differential rates for gaming venues, based on sound evidence-based methodologies
- Increase the current 60 day time limit for local government responses to pokie applications to 90 days
- Provide local governments with resources to conduct proper assessments of pokie applications
- Implement all recommendations from the 2010 Auditor General's Taking Action On Problem Gambling Report, but especially:
  - Improved social and economic assessments by the VCGR, and
  - Better data and understanding of the local area impacts, and assessment methodologies within a local government area.
- Revise Clause 52.28 of the Statewide Planning Policy Framework to provide all local governments, whether or not they have stronger and up-to-date local policies to guide pokie applications
- Ensure that CSF funds are transparently provided and an increase in problem gambling programs for at-risk problem gamblers are funded, and
- Adopt a Community Trust model for the collection and distribution of any contributions from industry to local governments.

## **3. Make pokie and online gambling safer**

- Conduct a public inquiry into the advertising practices (including incentives) of the online gambling industry, with a view to significantly restricting current practices, in cooperation with the Federal Government
- Support Federal Government action to:
  - use taxation powers in the Australian Constitution to "pursue unilateral legislation" for poker machine reforms, and
  - adopt a national response to the recommendations of the Productivity Commission on problem gambling.
- Work collaboratively with federal and local governments as well as the community sector to adopt National Product Safety and Consumer Protection Standards for pokie and online gambling
- Ban all advertising (including incentives) that encourage children, or adults to bring their children into pokie venues and ban advertising for wagering services from all media where children are likely to be exposed
- Strengthen the current Pre-commitment regulations to require a mandatory, universal system to be adopted by 1 January 2013, and
- Significantly improve staff training to assist problem gamblers in venues.

## **B) BACKGROUND**

### **LGWGOG roles**

The LGWGOG is an advisory group of the Victorian Local Governance Association.

Roles of the Local Government Working Group on Gambling (LGWGOG) include:

- Provide a network for local government councillors and officers as well as community members and organisations to minimise the impact of problem gambling
- Advocate to State and Federal Governments
- Provide submissions to government and other agencies on problem gambling, and
- Provide advice to the Victorian Local Governance Association's Board on possible actions on problem gambling.

While the key focus for the LGWGOG is on electronic gaming machines (pokies), we are also concerned about the increasing reach and commercialisation of online gambling.

### **LGWGOG members & meetings**

LGWGOG members include councillor and staff representatives of 60 local governments, as well as around 15 community health, advocacy and other community organisations.

The LGWGOG meets bi-monthly at the VLGA.

### **Recent Submissions**

State Government's Pre-commitment on Pokies

[http://vlga.org.au/site/DefaultSite/filesystem/documents/Responsible%20Gambling/INT%202010-09-01%20InterChurch%20Gambling%20Taskforce%20and%20VLGA%20submission%20to%20pre-commitment%20consultation%20paper%20Sept%202010%20\(2\).pdf](http://vlga.org.au/site/DefaultSite/filesystem/documents/Responsible%20Gambling/INT%202010-09-01%20InterChurch%20Gambling%20Taskforce%20and%20VLGA%20submission%20to%20pre-commitment%20consultation%20paper%20Sept%202010%20(2).pdf)

Productivity Commission Inquiry

<http://vlga.org.au/site/DefaultSite/filesystem/documents/Responsible%20Gambling/INT%20-%202009%20March%2027%20ResponsetoProductivityCommission.pdf>