



JOINT MEDIA RELEASE

4 September, 2019

Gambling harm set to increase with introduction of Bill

The decision by the WA Labor Government, Liberal Opposition and the Nationals to allow simulated gambling in TAB outlets across Western Australia has been slammed by the social service and public health sectors, as a 'sweetener' to the sale of the state-owned asset.

The Western Australian Council of Social Service declared it a dark day for WA.

"The State Parliament has knowingly voted to increase gambling harm in our community," said Chris Twomey, Policy and Research Leader at WACOSS.

"Large numbers of public health experts and frontline community services who directly deal with the consequences of gambling and financial hardship on a daily basis, have written to members of the Legislative Council to raise their concerns about the impact of simulated racing machines.

"When more and more people turn up at their doors as a result of the harmful effects of gambling – as we have seen it in other states – it will be no comfort to us that we warned the State Government that this would be the result.

Anglicare WA CEO Mark Glasson said while the battle to stop the inclusion of simulated gaming included in the TAB sale legislation was not won, the war to stop the introduction of 'Trackside' is far from over.

"It is not too late for the State Government to do the right thing," explained Mr Glasson. "Just because the legislation allows for the inclusion of 'Trackside' in the TAB Sale, it doesn't have to be included.

"The whole community service sector is appealing to the Government to rethink its position. We urge those Labor MPs who know this is a step in the wrong direction to speak up in the party room and stand up for Western Australian families who will be harmed by this decision.

"It's shameful our State Government is prepared to risk more WA children going hungry, more families being plunged into poverty, more relationship breakdowns and even more family and domestic violence. This is what 'problem gambling' looks like."

Public Health Association Australia WA Branch President, Hannah Pierce, said the decision to weaken existing restrictions on electronic gambling machines in WA is at odds with recommendations from the recent Sustainable Health Review.

"The Government initiated the Review, which recognised the importance of prevention in addressing health issues and reducing inequity in health outcomes," said Ms Pierce.

"With problem gambling linked to suicide and mental health problems, the introduction of simulated racing in TABs undermines the review, as it's likely to have adverse impacts on the health of the community."

Mr Twomey anticipated it will cost far more in the long term than the TAB sale and increased gambling revenue will ever generate.



JOINT MEDIA RELEASE

4 September, 2019

“The suggestion that this product has more in common with genuine racing than pokies is a farce. Just like the pokies, simulated racing is an electronic gambling machine; the odds are generic and the winner is randomly generated. ‘Trackside’ describes itself as having “the simplicity and payout characteristics of numbers’ games such as Keno” – a product the government ironically recognises does not belong anywhere in WA outside of the casino.”

“We acknowledge the principled stance of the Greens, One Nation, the independent Charles Smith and the three lower house Liberal MPs who crossed the floor to vote against this legislation,” said Mr Twomey.

[ENDS]

Media contact:

Emma-Jane Morcombe, Anglicare WA, emmajane.morcombe@anglicarewa.org.au, 0439 272 262

Laurene Coller, WACOSS Communications Officer, laurene@wacoss.org.au, 0419 316 557

Hannah Pierce, PHAA WA: Hannah.pierce@curtin.edu.au, 0415 673 978