



11 April 2011

A LICENCE TO PUNT IS UN-AUSTRALIAN

Australia's clubs and pubs have today launched a national campaign (www.its-unaustralian.com.au) which brands the proposed licence to punt on the pokies as un-Australian.

The Federal Government has said it will push ahead with the \$3 billion technology after Tasmanian Independent MP Andrew Wilkie threatened to force a Federal election if the Government refused to support his proposal.

The technology, which has never been tested or trialled in Australia, requires any person who plays a poker machine to register for a licence which must then be inserted into the machine whenever they want to bet.

President of ClubsAustralia Peter Newell said a political deal that sells out Australia's clubs and pubs is shameful.

"The Federal Government is choosing to support one man in Tasmania over the 300,000 Australians that work in clubs and pubs and the millions of people who belong to a club.

"More than 5 million Australians have a flutter on the pokies at least once a year. These people are overwhelmingly responsible punters who are now being told they'll need to register for a card even if they want to bet just a few dollars.

"This licence to punt technology is untested and unsupported by many of Australia's leading problem gambling experts such as Professor Alex Blaszczynski from the University of Sydney and Lifeline.

"Recreational punters will understandably boycott any system that tracks their gambling activity and treats them like a problem gambler. To make these people feel like addicts simply because they enjoy playing the pokies is un-Australian.

"Clubs and pubs will fight this licence to punt for as long as we need to. There is no end date for our campaign and if it needs to run until the next Federal election then so be it.

"Today clubs and hotels have run advertisements in newspapers around the country as well as launching a website and video which makes clear the political madness of a licence to punt.

"Later this month our message will go up on billboards in capital cities as well as the Gold Coast and the NSW Central Coast.

"The "It's un-Australian" message will also be un-missable to any person who visits one of the 5,700 clubs and pubs across the country that have poker machines. Posters and coasters will be placed throughout.

"Australians did not vote for a licence to punt at the 2010 Federal election and they never would. Government backbenchers know what clubs are about and recognise this stuff is electoral poison, and it's only going to get worse for them," Peter Newell said.

President of the Australian Hotels Association (NSW) Scott Leach said making Australians register for a licence to gamble would unfairly punish those living and working in regional Australia.

"The majority of hotels with gaming machines are located in country and regional Australia. The bush pub and the communities they support will be devastated by the proposal," he said.

- 5 million people play a poker machine each year
- 95,000 people are problem gamblers (2% of pokie players)
- \$3 billion cost to link 197,000 poker machines to a national mandatory pre-commitment system
- The Productivity Commission states that there is an annual net positive social contribution from poker machines of between \$768 million and \$5.5 billion.

Media: Jeremy Bath 0419 267 789