

Pokies change 'will close clubs

SPORTING clubs and RSLs across the state say they are at risk of closing if the Federal Government delivers on a key promise to Tasmanian independent MP Andrew Wilkie.

South Australia's 66 not-for-profit community clubs with poker machines will be hit by the Government's pledge to introduce a "mandatory pre-commitment" scheme for pokies players, Clubs SA says.

"These are small community-based groups which provide real services to the community," Clubs SA general manager Helen Martin said yesterday.

"Some of these clubs have said they will close and others said they will cut services."

The warning comes as Clubs Australia today launches a \$20 million media campaign opposing the pre-commitment scheme. The scheme would require pokies players to indicate how much money they would be willing to lose before they started gambling.

South Australian independent Senator Nick Xenophon yesterday said the Clubs Australia campaign was "based on a lie".

He said the pre-commitment scheme would target people losing large amounts in single sessions, not recreational gamblers. "Recreational gamblers would not have to sign up if they were playing low-intensity machines," he said.

Marion RSL president Trevor Chapman yesterday said the scheme would "ruin us".

Mr Chapman, 79, a veteran of the British Royal Artillery, said Marion RSL had eight poker machines which provided a

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"major subsidy" towards the club's services.

"We get a lot of old dears in here who might put through \$5 or \$10 at a time," he said. "The machines carry us. We are able to provide a seniors' computer school free of charge, and exercise classes for seniors."

Last year Mr Wilkie demanded the introduction of a mandatory pre-commitment scheme in gaming machine venues across Australia by 2014 in exchange for his support for the Gillard Government.

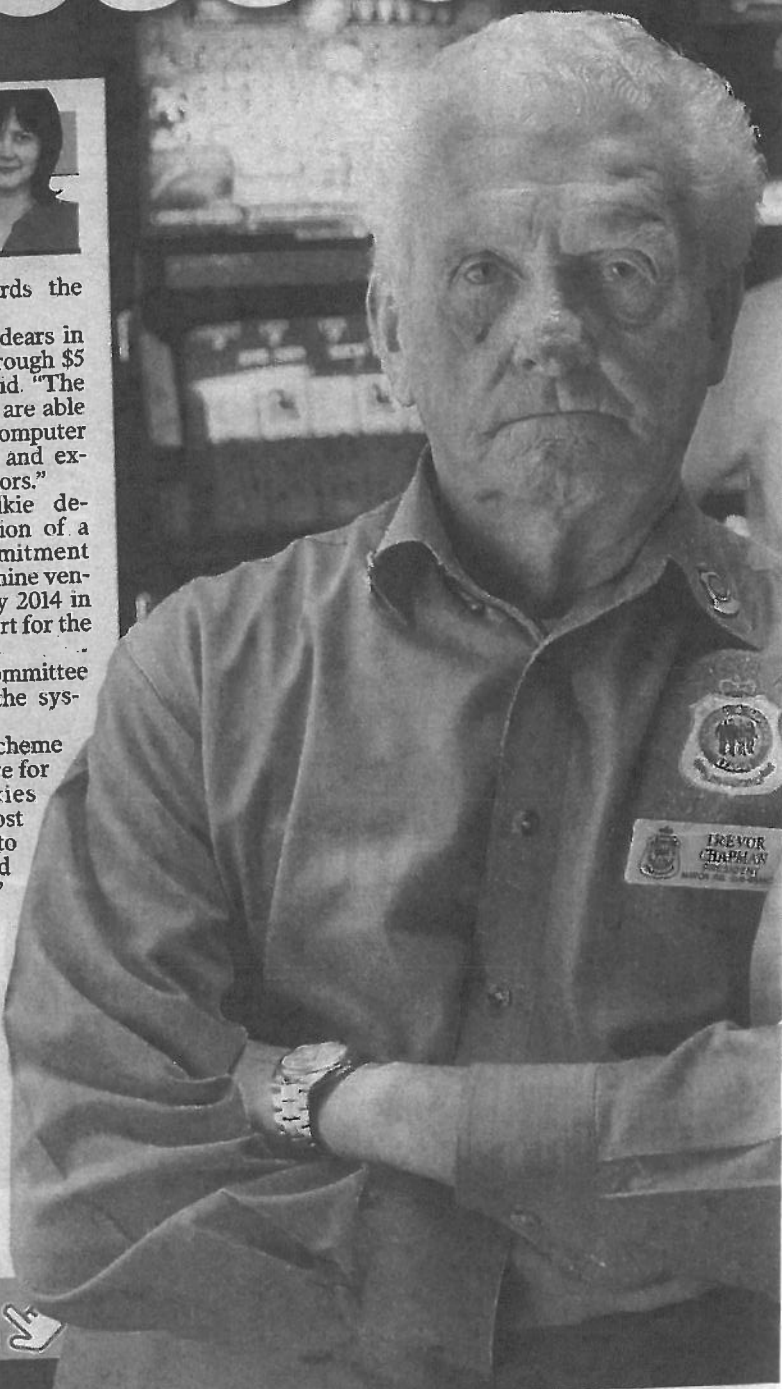
A parliamentary committee is investigating how the system would work.

Ms Martin said the scheme would be a disincentive for "recreational" pokies players. "It's the impost of having to sign up to something to spend your own money," she said.

"If you've got \$1 in your pocket you're not going to sign up to put it through a machine."

Independent MP Tony Windsor has indicated he is likely to vote against the legislation.

Fellow independent Rob Oakeshott also has concerns about the scheme.



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Wilkie's pokies scheme? adelaide.com.au

SURVIVAL FEARS: Marion RSL president Trevor Chapman says poker machines provide much-needed funding for club services.

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Mr Duthie said he had opened then, OK, it'd be

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