

National Club News

National Club News is a Clubs Australia Publication

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Poker Machine Reform: Policy on the Run

'Well-designed regulation has a vital role to play in overcoming some of the problems that lead to inefficient or inequitable market outcomes ... Poorly designed regulation may not achieve its objectives and can impose costs on businesses and the community more broadly. The Australian Government has reaffirmed its commitment to a rigorous system for assessing the impact of regulatory proposals and alternative options ... by:

- requiring a case to be established for acting in response to a perceived policy problem, including addressing whether regulatory action is required and whether the proposed regulation achieves the policy objective in a manner that minimises costs for business and the community
- encouraging transparent, timely and meaningful consultation with affected parties
- assisting decision makers to understand the full range of costs and benefits of their decision, at the time they are making their decision, and
- making the information available to government decision makers available to the public.'

So wrote former Minister for Finance and Deregulation, Lindsay Tanner MP, in his foreword to the Government's *Best Practice Regulation Handbook*. When it comes to poker machine reform, however, the Government has ignored its own playbook and pressed ahead with its decision without evidence or meaningful consultation. Clubs Australia has not been alone in calling for a trial and cost benefit analysis of proposals for mandatory pre-commitment or a \$1 maximum bet limit.

'There needs to be a comprehensive cost-benefit study of MPC because there is no doubt the costs are substantial... Second, there needs to be a series of well-designed trials to assess the effectiveness of pre-commitment, including voluntary arrangements.'
Judith Sloan, former Productivity Commission Commissioner

'My personal view is clubs are justified in seeking additional information that the mandatory pre-commitment scheme will be effective and I am seeking a longer transitional period.'
Hon Robert McClelland MP

'If the government proceeded with mandatory pre-commitment, it should be trialled to gauge its effectiveness and its impact on jobs.'
Tara Moriarty, United Voice

'We also support a trial of mandatory pre-commitment technology in a designated jurisdiction, as recommended by the Productivity Commission Report.'
Salvation Army Australia Eastern Territory

Other Government MPs, including Tony Burke, Janelle Saffin, Stephen Jones, Jason Clare, Mike Kelly and David Bradbury have also called for a trial. But let's leave the last word with the Productivity Commission:

'The Australian Government should enter into negotiations with a state or territory government to sponsor a full-scale regional trial or trials for a full [mandatory] pre-commitment regime ... Trialling should ... substantiate that full pre-commitment has sufficient advantages over partial [voluntary] pre-commitment to justify proceeding with its implementation.'
PC Report Recommendation 19.2

On 1 November, the Institute of Public Affairs released its own analysis of the Productivity Commission's estimation of the number of problem gamblers in Australia and their contribution to poker machine revenue. Their report found:

'A rigorous analysis of the Productivity Commission's estimates show that the total number of problem gamblers using pokie machines may be as low as 57,000; not the 159,000 estimated by the Commission.'

'Problem gamblers are likely to only contribute between 10 and 20 per cent of pokie machine revenue; not the 43 per cent estimated by the Commission.'



Clubs Australia



Clubs Support Blind Courage

Clubs have a long history of helping their local community and supporting good causes. This December clubs are at it again with a big project running (or cycling) across three states.

From 5 to 24 December, blind Brisbane local, Lorin Nicholson, is undertaking his second Blind Courage expedition, cycling 1,700 kilometres from Queensland to Victoria, to raise money for Vision Australia. Clubs Australia is sponsoring the ride and organising clubs on the scheduled itinerary stops to provide free meals and accommodation.

Lorin, 43, was declared legally blind when just four years of age. He is the eldest of six children; three of whom are blind. In his youth, Lorin was an accomplished cyclist, swimmer and spring-board diver. He went on to receive a college diploma with high distinction and start his own remedial therapy business which grew to 30,000 clients.

He is also a classically-trained guitarist who has released four top-selling music albums, and he was named one of Australia's finest musicians at the Country Music Awards of Australia in 2005. He is also a published children's author and was honoured in 2009 as an Australian of the Year nominee. On top of all this, he is one of Australia's leading motivational speakers, focusing on youth issues in his anti-bullying seminars, concerts and conferences. He has presented to more than half a million people throughout Australia, New Zealand and America over the past five years.

A yearning to inspire other blind or low-vision people started in 2007 when Lorin rode a tandem pushbike 275km traversing the Great Dividing Range from Tamworth to Port Macquarie in under 36 hours, raising \$7,000 for Vision Australia.

His next challenge was to ride across Australia with his brother Dean, also blind, from Perth to Sydney, the first Blind Courage ride. That is when his relationship with Clubs Australia started. Lorin said last time clubs helped

him generate \$30,000 for Vision Australia, but what really impressed him was the generosity, community spirit and support and encouragement he received from clubs.

"I'm striving for my goals and trying to change the public's perception of what blind people can do," he said. "About 63 per cent of blind Australians are struggling to get work because people don't give them a go or they don't have the confidence to go out and do what they want to do. Money helps but attitudes and inspiration are really something money doesn't buy - there is a need for both."

"The first time we did Blind Courage when clubs came on board, I noticed a huge difference from other fundraisers I have done. This is because clubs really supported us financially, physically and gave moral support as a community; all clubs everywhere helped, even the clubs in towns we didn't pass through, they still gave a donation to the cause."

"This time around I am looking forward to receive their support for as Blind Courage continues, I couldn't do it without clubs. I am also looking forward to meeting old club friends and making new ones along the way."

Lorin will perform with his guitar on Channel 9's coverage of Vision Australia's Carols by Candlelight on 23 December.

