

30 January 2023

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## **TIME'S UP FOR PROBLEM GAMBLERS IN CLUBS**

NSW clubs will conduct welfare checks on poker machine players at least every three hours, with problem gamblers set to be involuntarily excluded from venues, under a new Gaming Code of Practice released by ClubsNSW today.

Under the Code, which takes effect from 1 July this year, club staff will undergo advanced training to help them identify key problem gambling indicators. In the event that a player shows any level of distress or hardship, they will need to take a break from gambling for at least 24 hours.

Patrons showing serious signs of a gambling problem such as seeking credit for gambling, borrowing money from other patrons, or admitting to stealing money to gamble will be offered counselling and automatically barred from club gaming rooms across the state.

Every club will have a designated Responsible Gambling Officer.

The Code will also enable family members to request an exclusion for loved ones who they believe are experiencing gambling harm, with an expert gambling counsellor to determine whether a ban is appropriate.

ClubsNSW CEO Josh Landis said there has been a lot of public debate about gaming reform recently, but the new Gaming Code of Practice will be the most effective way to protect problem gamblers while also keeping criminal activity out of clubs.

"Clubs have always been the safest places to gamble, and they are about to become even safer thanks to this landmark Code of Practice, which we are extremely proud of.

"We strongly believe that the best solutions come from front-line workers rather than bureaucrats or activists. This Code represents the best ideas from industry experts for addressing problem gambling and eliminating the proceeds of crime from clubs while protecting jobs and community contributions.

"Unlike the proposed mandatory cashless card, the Code is a cost-effective and targeted approach to gaming reform.

"No club wants problem gamblers or criminals in their venue. Introducing facial recognition technology in clubs will ensure problem gamblers will be kept out of club gaming rooms and criminals won't be able to step foot inside a club anywhere in New South Wales.

“If someone appears to have a gambling problem, clubs will intervene and get them the help they need. If the person refuses to accept that help, clubs can have them banned from their venues — we are prepared to protect people from themselves where it’s appropriate to do so,” Mr Landis said.

The Gaming Code of Practice also outlines lifetime bans for suspected money launderers from all clubs. Potentially suspicious money laundering behaviour includes offering to buy a winning gaming machine ticket from someone else, loaning a person money to play a gaming machine or regularly depositing large amounts of money into a gaming machine and cashing it out without playing.

“The industry is committed to assisting law enforcement identify those in clubs who may have engaged in spending the proceeds of criminal activity,” Mr Landis said.

“While the NSW Crime Commission found that money laundering via poker machines is high-risk, inefficient and not a widespread practice in clubs, this Code further demonstrates our industry’s dedication to keeping criminals and their ill-gotten gains out of our venues.”

The release of the Gaming Code of Practice follows a six-month consultation period with the club industry, government and other stakeholders after a draft Code was announced by ClubsNSW in July 2022.

All ClubsNSW members have agreed to adopt the code, with penalties for non-compliance including a ban from the Association.

– ENDS –

#### **Key Facts:**

- Club staff to conduct player welfare checks every three hours
- Club-initiated exclusions for those thought to be experiencing gambling harm
- Family-initiated exclusions for those thought to be experiencing gambling harm
- State-wide club bans for suspected criminals
- Compulsory facial recognition technology for NSW clubs
- Additional responsible gambling and AML/CTF training for club staff
- Mandatory Responsible Gambling Officers for clubs.

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