



It's time to put pokies in their place

Email to synodmeeting@nswact.uca.org.au

That the Synod

Set out the action to be taken by the Synod, e.g. requests encourages, directs, adopts the statement/report, appoints a committee/task group, records its appreciation, approves the guidelines, making reference to the body to whom it is directed.

That the Synod request congregations to support urgent reform of the poker machine industry in NSW by:

1. Identifying a Gambling Reform Champion to lead and foster local reform actions and initiatives with the support of the Wesley Mission Advocacy Team.
2. Making representation (in writing or in person) to their elected state parliamentary members advocating for the five key reform measures outlined in the 'put pokies in their place' campaign.
3. Encouraging its members to be kept regularly informed and engaged in the campaign by joining a growing community of advocates at [Show your support | Wesley Mission](#)
4. Participating in other reform campaign initiatives, including the display of campaign signage on church property and engagement in campaign events, supported by the Wesley Mission Advocacy Team.
5. Joining with others in praying for the full and timely success of the Put Pokies in Their Place reform campaign that would see gambling harm significantly reduced across NSW.

The scope of a proposal

Be concise and clear e.g. what this consists of; what is and isn't part of this proposal. The more specific you can be, the better.

As a vital expression of the church's gospel witness, Wesley Mission seeks the ongoing and amplified support of the Synod through its congregations and members in continuing to press our elected representatives to implement real, substantive and effective reform of the poker machine industry in NSW. Such reform would lead to a significant reduction in the rate of gambling harm that afflicts our state.

Rationale

A rationale is a kind of sub-proposal within a proposal: it offers the reasons for proceeding to address a particular problem with a particular solution.

For Wesley Mission, advocacy for gambling reform is gospel work, and a vital expression of our Word and deed commitment to live out that gospel. The gospel of Jesus Christ is good news for the poor and release to the captive and will at times require us to speak truth to power. Having many decades ago established Australia's first dedicated gambling counselling service, and daily hearing stories of the trauma caused through gambling addiction, we believe it is beyond time for an unchecked and predatory industry to be appropriately reigned in and regulated.

To this end, Wesley Mission seeks the ongoing support of the Synod through its congregations and members by adding their voice to the growing and urgent call for poker machine reform in our state.

There is an urgent need and compelling case for comprehensive reform of the poker machine industry in NSW. Australians lose more than \$12billion to poker machines every year, around half of all gambling losses. Through 2022 an astonishing \$8.1billion was lost in NSW alone, which equates to around \$1000 per person in our state – the highest rate of per capita losses anywhere in the world. Australia, and NSW in particular, holds the dubious record of being the poker machine, and indeed the gambling harm capital of the world.

The direct and indirect harm caused by the poker machines is devastating and far reaching, research showing an impact on between 900 thousand and 1.7 million people across NSW. Gambling harm caused by poker machines directly correlates with increased rates of suicidality, domestic and family violence, financial stress – as well as other profoundly negative social outcomes. With machines designed to addict, and for too long operated by an industry unchecked by adequate legislation and regulatory controls, the need for reform is critical. Lives are literally at stake. Wesley Mission’s gambling and financial counsellors, as well as other frontline staff, hear heartbreaking stories every day of lives traumatised by addiction wrought by poker machines.

Last October Wesley Mission launched the Put Pokies in Their Place coalition (<https://www.wesleymission.org.au/get-involved/advocacy/gambling-reform/put-pokies-in-their-place/>) The coalition includes a growing number of faith and community groups, including the NSW Synod, NCOSS, National Council of Women NSW, NSW Council of Churches, Ethnic Communities Council NSW, Wayside Chapel, The Salvation Army and many others. The NSW Synod through the Moderator was one of the earliest supporters of the campaign, for which we are very grateful.

This campaign is focussed on the pursuit of five key reform measures:

- Implementation of universal cashless gambling with harm reduction measures built in
- Power down poker machines between Midnight and 10am
- Fund an independent State-wide self-exclusion register
- Let communities have a say about poker machines licences through their Local Councils
- Greater transparency around poker machine venue data

The campaign gained significant traction and momentum leading into the March state election, with both the then government and opposition releasing major gambling reform policies, the first time this has happened in recent memory. There was also significant and sustained media interest which continues to this day. The community appetite for real reform is palpable and continues post-election, confirmed by community research that Wesley Mission commissioned.

It is critical that this momentum for reform is not lost. With the government soon to implement its promised Cashless Gaming Trial, it is vital that the community, and especially the church, continues to amplify its voice to our elected representatives, communicating the clear expectation that real, substantive and effective reforms of such a harmful industry is implemented as soon as possible, and certainly during this term of parliament.

Proposers

A proposer and the seconder must be attending the Synod in Session as members. If the proposal is from one of Synod's reporting bodies (committee, board, presbytery, task group), it should be submitted and signed by an authorised officer of that body.

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