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## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **NSW STANDS FIRM ON FEDERAL POKIES REFORM**

27 May, 2011

The O'Farrell Government has joined other States and Territories in unanimously and formally opposing the Federal Government's mandatory pre-commitment scheme.

The Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Hospitality, Racing and The Arts, George Souris, told the Council Of Australian Governments (COAG) meeting today that NSW opposed the 'Gillard-Wilkie' scheme because there was no evidence it would effectively address problem gambling and it would certainly devastate local clubs and communities.

Mr Souris, said all States and Territories supported a voluntary scheme that was venue-based and cost effective.

They also unanimously agreed on a number of other initiatives, including:

- Prohibiting live odds promotion during sporting coverage, with racing exempt
  
- Investigating methods of regulating online gambling
  
- Considering the implementation of dynamic warnings following the results of trials in Queensland

"The NSW Government is not willing to jeopardise thousands of jobs and endanger vital community programs across the State for a scheme that will not even effectively address problem gambling," Mr Souris said.

"A mandatory pre-commitment scheme is inconsistent with the Productivity Commission's recommendations and the Federal Government has not provided any evidence that it would make a difference to problem gambling.

"In fact, in NSW, the incidence of problem gambling in Australia has dropped from two per cent of the population 10 years ago to 0.4 per cent now so our harm minimisation programs must be working.

"We also oppose the proposed \$250 cash withdrawal limit from ATMs and EFTPOS facilities in gaming venues, which would severely restrict the ability of people in regional and remote areas to safely conduct their banking where ATM access is limited," Mr Souris said.

“NSW already requires ATMs to be located away from gaming areas and bans cash withdrawals from credit card accounts inside licensed venues.

Mr Souris said NSW was committed to implementing proven effective measures designed with the clear objective of minimising gambling-related harm.

“Poker machines are already highly regulated by the States. The Federal Government should concentrate on regulating other forms of gambling and that’s why NSW supports a more effective prohibition of online gambling and better regulation of the quoting of betting odds during live sporting telecasts,” he said.

“A mandatory pre-commitment system would drive punters away from licensed venues to underground or online gambling sites, where the risk for under-age and problem gambling would be much worse.

“The Federal Government’s proposal would see poker machine revenues in NSW slashed and that means losing jobs and even whole venues.

“These venues provide much-needed support for their local communities, including food and entertainment outlets, social meeting places for seniors as well as financial and in kind support for grassroots sport and community organisations”.

In NSW, there are 546 registered clubs in metropolitan areas and 829 in regional areas with a total club membership of almost six million.

Regional club generate almost 26,000 jobs and metropolitan clubs almost 19,000 jobs.

The cost to NSW clubs would be somewhere between two and three billion dollars in technology installation and revenue loss as well as more than 16,000 jobs.

"The NSW Government will not support any measure that harms our communities, rather than helps them. The Federal Government’s pre-commitment scheme is not the answer,” Mr Souris said.

“The O’Farrell Government will make sure that the voices of NSW communities are heard, jobs preserved and communities protected.”