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Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Hospitality and Racing

Minister for the Arts

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30 May, 2011

New South Wales voices its strenuous objections to the Gillard/Wilkie to force mandatory pre-commitment on Australian poker machine players.

The NSW Minister for Hospital and Tourism, George Souris, pointed out that tomorrow was the deadline that Tasmanian independent Andrew Wilkie set the Gillard Government to deliver State and Territory agreement on mandatory pre-commitment, dynamic warnings/cost of play displays and a \$250 daily withdrawal limit on ATMs in venues with poker machines (excluding casinos).

“This is part one of the ‘deal’. Part 2 requires the Commonwealth to override the State and Territory legislation by May 2012 if there is agreement.

“Despite this threat, we all remain steadfast in opposing this poorly thought out scheme by this one Member who is holding the Federal Government and the people of Australia to ransom,” said Mr Souris.

“And it’s no surprise that even senior Labor official and liquor and hospitality workers’ union secretary Tara Moriarty, has criticised the deal, warning that thousands of jobs were at risk if mandatory pre-commitment was forced upon the States”.

Mr Souris has called on independents, especially those from NSW, in the Federal Parliament to heed their constituents and put an end to this plan which would not only see employment in the club industry plummet, but would severely adversely affect the support provided to their communities.

“I call on these Independents to join with the Federal Opposition in opposing the destructive plan.

“There is no doubt that this scheme would sound the death knell of some clubs and many communities would suffer greatly due to lost revenue and the inability of clubs to support local organisations and supply subsidised meals, entertainment and other facilities .

“The Federal Government has produced no evidence that mandatory pre-commitment would lower the incidence of problem gambling. In fact, in NSW, with its harm minimisation program, the incidence of problem gambling has declined from 2 per cent of gamblers a decade ago to just 0.4 per cent today.

“A report tabled by the South Australian Government and supported by NSW at the recent COAG meeting, found that a voluntary pre-commitment scheme offered ‘greater net benefits’ to problem gamblers than a mandatory system.

“Poker machines are already highly regulated by the States and we believe that a voluntary pre-commitment system would benefit both gamblers and registered clubs.

“The Gillard/Wilkie plan would cost NSW clubs up to three billion dollars in technology application and lost revenue, as well as 16,000 jobs, according to Clubs NSW.”

Mr Souris said the principle of State rights was also an issue and re-iterated that the NSW Government would never support any measure that harms its communities.

“The expedient and unresearched Gillard/Wilkie scheme is not the answer and the Liberal/National Coalition Government will continue its fight to ensure the State’s jobs are preserved and communities protected.

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