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## ANDREW WILKIE WITHDRAWS SUPPORT FOR GOVERNMENT

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The Independent Member for Denison, Andrew Wilkie, has withdrawn his support for the Federal Government due to the Prime Minister's failure to honour her agreement on poker machine reform.

"I can no longer guarantee supply and confidence for the Government because the Prime Minister has told me she can't honour the promise to introduce mandatory pre-commitment on poker machines by the end of 2014," Mr Wilkie said.

"Consequently I regard the Prime Minister to be in breach of the written agreement she signed, leaving me no option but to honour my word and end my current relationship with her Government.

"Frankly, a deal's a deal and it must be honoured. Our democracy is simply too precious to trash with broken promises and backroom compromises. So I will walk, take my chances and so be it.

"As someone said to me this week, millions of people are concerned about poker machines, but everyone should care about politicians being true to their word.

"Moreover the Government has failed to seize the opportunity to enact genuinely meaningful poker machine reform. This Parliament presents a remarkable opportunity to finally do something about poker machine problem gambling and its devastating social and financial damage cost. But instead the Government took the easy way out.

"The Government's explanation that it doesn't have the numbers is simply wrong. The legislation should be debated in the Parliament and tested on the floor of the House. After all, that's what democracy is supposed to be about."

Mr Wilkie acknowledged that the Government is pursuing limited reform and expressed the hope that this first step would lead to meaningful reform.

"I will not stand in the Government's way because I do feel that in the circumstances it would be better to achieve at least some reform.

"The push for pokies reform has not failed," he said. "Poker machine problem gambling is now a hot topic, polling shows a strong groundswell for reform and the Commonwealth is set to intervene in gambling regulation for the first time in our history.

"But our foothold is small, so it's more important than ever that pressure is kept on the Government to deliver the reform package announced today and eventually much more.

"Some people will ask why I would still withdraw my support for the Government when it's progressing reform.

"But the issue is not that the Government is not progressing poker machine reform. Rather the issue is that the Government has decided it can't deliver on the reforms it agreed to, which I've insisted repeatedly were the basis for my ongoing support and which I've honoured since the agreement was made some 16 months ago."

Mr Wilkie added that in relation to matters of confidence, it's in the public interest for parliaments to be stable and go full term.

"I will only support motions of no confidence in the event of serious misconduct and not support

politically opportunistic motions. I will consider budget measures on their merits.

“As far as I’m concerned it’s still early days in the campaign for reform because too many people are being hurt by the pokies and the vast majority of people are looking to their elected representatives to do something about the problem.

“This and future governments must be forced to understand that this is just the start. The millions of people affected adversely by poker machines now and in the future deserve nothing less than our full support to minimise the damage.

“I will continue to push for mandatory pre-commitment and \$1 maximum bets.”

**FURTHER INFORMATION:** Philippa Duncan 0428 528 673