

PRE-COMMITMENT TECHNOLOGY

In May 2011 all governments agreed to implement the infrastructure for pre-commitment on every poker machine in Australia.

The Gillard Government is now setting a timetable for this major reform so that by the end of 2016 Australia will be mandatory pre-commitment ready.

This timeline is consistent with the Productivity Commission's recommendations and means that pre-commitment will be rolled out to all venues with pokies, including clubs, pubs and casinos.

It is important we start rolling out the infrastructure for pre-commitment now, while continuing to build the evidence base for mandatory pre-commitment through a robust trial.

Dynamic warnings and cost of play displays on poker machines – currently being developed and trialled -- will also be introduced on the same timetable.

The Gillard Government plans to sponsor a large-scale trial to build the evidence base for mandatory pre-commitment.

We have made a substantive financial offer to ClubsACT and the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) Government to conduct a 12 month trial in the ACT beginning in February 2013.

We expect that the ACT Government and the industry will support this trial.

As recommended by the Productivity Commission, the trial will test the operational features of mandatory pre-commitment, and assess whether mandatory pre-commitment delivers stronger benefits to communities and individuals than voluntary pre-commitment.

The trial will assess the impacts on problem gamblers, recreational gamblers, venues and communities.

The trial will conclude in early 2014 and will be rigorously evaluated by an independent research institution.

In addition, the Government will legislate for an independent review of the trial results by the Productivity Commission.

This review will be completed by August 2014 and will include recommendations to the Government on whether to flick the switch to mandatory pre-commitment.

The review will be required to be tabled in the Commonwealth Parliament, and the legislation will require the Government to respond within three months.

The Government will establish an Oversight Committee for the trial, with representatives from the industry, ACT Government, community sector and researchers.

This is a best practice approach to implementing a significant change to the way poker machines operate in Australia.

The Australian Government recognises that many states have taken strong steps to support pre-commitment in their own jurisdiction.

The Government's preference remains for the states and territories to deliver these changes and the legislation will allow for them to be administered by State and Territory Governments. The Government's legislation will make it clear that Commonwealth legislation only sets minimum requirements in relation to gaming machines.

The legislation will make clear that these regulations do not alter the ability of a state or territory to determine the distribution and number of gaming machines in that jurisdiction.

We will also work closely with industry on pre-commitment solutions that are cost-effective to venues.

Recognising the special needs of small venues

The Government understands that small clubs and pubs in regional towns are not the same as large pokies venues in the cities.

We have listened to the concerns of small venues, many in our regional and rural communities, and will ensure that these venues have more time to get ready for pre-commitment.

Very small venues, with 10 poker machines or less, will be able to implement these changes as they replace their poker machines, as per their normal replacement cycle. This will remove any upfront implementation costs for these very small venues, which are often located in regional and rural communities.

Venues with between 11 and 20 poker machines will have an extra four years to implement these changes.