

## Don't Bet on Health – Stop the introduction of simulated racing machines in WA

The WA Government is currently considering legislation to privatise the TAB, the state-owned betting agency. **As part of the sale, the legislation will permit simulated racing machines to be placed in TABs in WA.** Simulated racing is defined in the proposed legislation as a game that uses animated images of a horse or greyhound race and randomly generates winners. The machines are a form of electronic gaming.

The Bill has already passed the Legislative Assembly. It will be discussed in the Legislative Council when Parliament resumes in August.

PHAA WA is very concerned about the introduction of simulated racing, as any expansion of electronic gaming is likely to increase gambling harm in WA.

### **We ask your organisation to take action to encourage the WA Government to amend the proposed legislation by:**

- Writing to all members of the Legislative Council, asking them to amend the *TAB (Disposal) Bill 2019* to stop the introduction of simulated racing machines in WA (contact details [here](#))
- Writing to key Ministers and Shadow Ministers expressing your concern, including Hon. Mark McGowan MLA, Premier; Hon. Ben Wyatt MLA, Treasurer; Hon. Roger Cook MLA, Minister for Health; Hon. Paul Papalia MLA, Minister for Racing and Gaming; and Hon. Simone McGurk MLA, Minister for Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence
- Raising awareness of the issue through social media (**#DontBetOnHealth**) and media releases
- Encourage other organisations and the community to write to the WA Government or raise awareness

*PHAA WA is happy to provide support to draft letters and social media posts, and to discuss media releases or further advocacy opportunities.*

### **Background**

Western Australia is the only state that does not have electronic gaming machines in licensed premises or sporting clubs. This is the result of a decades-long bipartisan commitment to restrict them to the casino. This unique situation has meant WA has lower levels of gambling expenditure per capita than other states.

Gambling causes harm to the physical, social and mental health of communities, families and individuals. Moderate to severe problem gambling results in suicide, relationship breakdown, financial difficulty, mental health problems such as anxiety and depression, and crime.<sup>1,2</sup> Gambling particularly affects vulnerable groups in the community such as people from low socioeconomic backgrounds.<sup>1,2</sup>

### **Key messages for inclusion**

**Key ask:** Amend the *TAB (Disposal) Bill 2019* to stop the introduction of simulated racing machines in WA.

- WA is a leader on many public health issues. Our current restriction on electronic gaming machines is the envy of many other Australian jurisdictions.
- WA can be proud to have one of the lowest rates of gambling expenditure per capita in the country. Any expansion of electronic gaming is likely to increase gambling harm in WA.
- The WA Government should not be putting the sale price of TAB over the WA community's health.
- Simulated racing machines will exploit already vulnerable people with yet another avenue for gambling.
- WA Governments for decades have committed to keeping WA free of electronic gaming machines. Does the McGowan Government want to be the one to break that commitment?

For further information, or to discuss what your organisation could do, please contact [phaawabranh@gmail.com](mailto:phaawabranh@gmail.com).

**References (hyperlinks included)**

1. [Productivity Commission. Gambling, Report No. 50. Volumes 1 & 2. Canberra: Productivity Commission; 2010.](#)
2. [Billi R, Stone CA, Marden P, Yeung K. The Victorian Gambling Study: A longitudinal study of gambling and health in Victoria 2008-2012. Victoria, Australia: Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation; 2014.](#)

*Further reading (hyperlinks included):*

1. [Public Health Association Australia. PHAA Policy Statement on: Gambling and Health Policy Statement. Canberra, Australia: PHAA; 2017](#)
2. [Browne, M, Langham, E, Rawat, V, Greer, N, Li, E, Rose, J, Rockloff, M, Donaldson, P, Thorne, H, Goodwin, B, Bryden, G & Best, T. Assessing gambling-related harm in Victoria: a public health perspective. Melbourne, Australia: Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation; 2016.](#)