**Dr Marisa Paterson MLA**

MEMBER FOR MURRUMBIDGEE

**MEDIA RELEASE**

**30 August 2023**

 **Legislation to Keep Molonglo Valley Pokie Free!!**

Molonglo Valley, and any currently undeveloped areas of the ACT, will never see a poker machine under legislation introduced on 31st August 2023 by Dr. Marisa Paterson, MLA.

The legislative amendment to the Gaming Machine ACT 2003 will ban the authorisation of class C gaming machine licenses (poker machines) in the Molonglo Valley and undeveloped areas of the ACT.

"After running a substantial campaign in Molonglo Valley to understand residents' views, the feedback was clear - the vision that Molonglo Valley residents have for their developing community does not include poker machines", stated Dr Paterson.

The ‘Keep Molonglo Pokie-Free’ campaign was launched by Dr Marisa Paterson on 2nd May 2023.

Dr Paterson stated: “The concept behind the campaign was simple: proximity to poker machines increases gambling harm; the Molonglo Valley has no poker machines – it should stay that way. This does not mean that clubs cannot establish in new parts of Canberra, rather that if they do, they cannot bring pokies with them”.

In 2021, research conducted in Victoria found that people living 250 metres from a gambling venue were 6 percent more likely than the general population to gamble than those living more than two kilometres from a venue. This increase in gambling also contributed to increased experiences of gambling harm.

"There have been some very interesting discussions to come out of this grassroots campaign. For example, talks with the club sector in the ACT about what the future looks like, how is a club viable without poker machine revenue? Talks with Molonglo community groups, local sports organisations, and multicultural groups about community building challenges in the new suburbs. And questions about the role that the ACT Government plays in paving the way to support the best community outcomes " Dr. Paterson stated.

Dr Paterson suggests “This discussion is about more than divestment – this is about a reimagining of a community clubs, and the place that they might have in newly establishing communities in the ACT. What is clear from Molonglo residents is that they desire vibrant venues and community facilities in their community, but poker machines are not part of that future vision.”

This legislative reform marks a step forward in addressing gambling harm in the ACT.

Supporting quote from Carol Bennett, CEO of Alliance for Gambling Reforms

“We welcome the leadership shown by the ALP’s Marisa Paterson in introducing this Australian first legislation which reflects community sentiment in the new development of Molongo of a future without gambling harm. We would like to see this extend to other new developments not only in the ACT but around the country.”

Supporting quote from Dr Devin Bowles, CEO of ACT Council of Social Service Inc. (ACTCOSS)

“ACTCOSS strongly supports efforts to mitigate gambling harm in the ACT community through legislated restrictions on gaming machine licensing in the Molonglo Valley. The proposal to prevent the installation of new electronic gaming machines (EGMs) in the Molonglo Valley region is a proactive step towards prioritising the wellbeing of vulnerable community members.”

**Statement ends**

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