

Media Release

ACT Labor



12 June 2024

Fewer pokies, more housing for Canberra's future

A re-elected ACT Labor Government will continue to reduce the number electronic gaming machines (EGMs) in the nation's capital.

Our community clubs sector, who hold EGMs authorisations in the ACT, play an important role in the Canberra community. They are a major local employer, and a strong supporter of community and junior sports, and cultural events. Community clubs can and should be part of Canberra's future.

But the future of community clubs cannot be linked to the harm caused by gambling addiction, and the transition away from EGMs needs to continue.

ACT Labor believes that the most effective way to reduce the harm caused by EGMs is to reduce the number of machines available, and their geographic availability, alongside the introduction of mandatory harm reduction measures in venues.

If re-elected at the October election, Labor will seek to amend legislation to reduce the number of machines to just 1,000 machines in community club venues in the ACT by 2045.

This will be achieved by a mandated reduction of 500 machines every four years, through a compulsory surrender process.

ACT Labor already has a proven track record on reducing EGMs. The number of machines in Canberra has reduced from 5022 in 2015, to 3790 today.

Alongside this legislated compulsory reduction system, ACT Labor will continue to work with the local community clubs to move towards a more sustainable sector that delivers a long-term community benefit.

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A re-elected Labor Government will provide a framework to support clubs to invest in sustainable revenue ventures as they reduce the number of pokies they operate.

To further support housing supply in the Territory, a re-elected Labor Government will establish practical ways for community clubs use their land assets to invest in appropriate housing projects, including affordable housing, aged care, and build-to-rent.

The outcome will be more affordable housing in accessible locations across Canberra.

An ACT Labor Government will also encourage the establishment of a 'club of the future' in the Molonglo Valley – a community club without pokies.

ACT Labor's practical plan to reduce the harm caused by gambling addiction through EGMs also includes the introduction of mandatory, account based cashless gaming in all ACT venues.

A re-elected Labor Government would fast track the implementation of a cashless framework to 2026-27, which would provide users with personal spending and time limits to reduce harm arising from their use of pokies.

Our plan also includes a stronger self-exclusion scheme and the banning of ATMs and EFTPOS withdrawals in clubs.

It's a progressive, practical and proven plan to reduce the harm caused by gambling addiction and build a sustainable community clubs sector for Canberra's future.

Statement ends

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