

25 September 2020

CLUBS AND PUBS CONCERNED ABOUT PROPOSED NEW LEGISLATION

NSW clubs and pubs are deeply concerned by the potential impact and cost of the draft legislative changes outlined by NSW Customer Service Minister Dominello this morning.

While several of the harm-minimisation measures contained in the legislation were originally proposed by the industry, the government's intended implementation would create unnecessary red tape and place a significant compliance burden on venues.

Some of the proposed measures, including the installation of facial recognition technology, would cost the industry millions of dollars at a time when it can least afford it, threatening thousands of jobs and community funding.

ClubsNSW CEO Josh Landis said while the industry is committed to harm minimisation, the proposed changes had gone too far, too soon.

"Gaming revenue has fallen 14 per cent year-on-year as a result of the 10-week industry shutdown, while food and beverage takings are down 60 to 70 per cent," he said.

"I don't think anyone would agree that the middle of a pandemic is the right time to introduce onerous new compliance requirements."

AHA NSW CEO John Whelan said the industry has a proven record of supporting good harm-minimisation policy.

"18 years ago, AHA NSW and ClubsNSW began operating a self-exclusion program — two years before the introduction of compulsory self-exclusion," Mr Whelan said.

"In 2009, the industry recommended legislation be developed to allow family members to intervene to stop a loved one with a gambling problem. Unfortunately, this was rejected by government.

"COVID restrictions have meant pubs are now facing their most significant challenges in a hundred years — many are struggling to survive, many jobs have been lost.

"We continue to support good harm-minimisation policy, however, we have concerns with this bill. We don't believe our patrons want to be monitored through facial recognition each and every time they catch up with mates at the pub," he said.

ClubsNSW and AHA NSW are disappointed with the lack of effective consultation on the proposed legislation.

The industry has proactively engaged with the government in the harm-minimisation space, but these measures need to be implemented in a cost-effective and practical manner.

The lack of effective consultation with key industry stakeholders has resulted in unworkable proposals which will be impossible for venues to comply with.

Both ClubsNSW and the AHA look forward to the opportunity to engage with the government in a constructive manner in order to reach a sensible outcome.

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