

Chair's additional comments

1.1 Witnesses to this inquiry expressed disappointment that no progress has been made on poker machine reform by the Commonwealth. This disappointment involved not only the Prime Minister breaking her commitment to implement the gambling reforms agreed to after the 2010 federal election, but also the watered down package of reforms announced on 21 January this year. I share this disappointment.

1.2 After negotiating significant improvements in the Government's watered down package of reforms I reluctantly agreed to support the legislation. These changes were to ensure the independence of a trial of mandatory pre-commitment on poker machines, and to ensure that in the future all poker machines would be ready to convert to mandatory pre-commitment at the flick of a switch.

1.3 The Government's proposed poker machine reforms are far from perfect. But they're better than nothing and worth pursuing. In the circumstances I will not be the person who stands in the way of getting at least something done, not the least of which would be the precedent of Commonwealth intervention in poker machine regulation.

1.4 However the Government's reforms will not be realised unless the Liberal/National Opposition or the Greens agree to support them. And as far as the Greens at least are concerned, this will not happen unless the Government agrees to implement a \$1 maximum bet limit on poker machines.

1.5 I support \$1 maximum bets and tried to reach an agreement with the Government on this after the 2010 election. However the Government continues to have no interest in this important Productivity Commission recommendation and we run the very real risk of seeing no poker machine reform in this parliament. Frankly, for the Greens to continue to hold out for \$1 maximum bets is entirely unhelpful and likely to sound the death knell of poker machine reform for many years to come.

1.6 In the circumstances the Government and Greens need to try and reach an agreement that in future poker machines will be both \$1 maximum bet and mandatory pre-commitment capable. This would be a significant development and one that would give a future federal government the option of adopting either \$1 maximum bets or activating mandatory pre-commitment. Significantly, it would also give state and territory governments the option of going it alone.

1.7 The Committee heard that the millions of people affected in one way or another by problem gambling are fed up and frustrated by the delays with reform. The indifference, policy purity and political grandstanding behind these delays must stop.

Mr Andrew Wilkie MP

Chair

