

GETUP AND ANDREW WILKIE LAUNCH NEW CAMPAIGN FOR POKER-MACHINE REFORM.

This afternoon GetUp is launching a new campaign with an email from independent MP Andrew Wilkie, calling on its 430,000 members to petition the Government on help for problem gamblers.

“The gambling industry has launched a \$20 million campaign to scuttle proposed reforms to poker-machine usage,” GetUp Campaigns Director, Sam McLean said. “They’ve made this investment to protect the massive revenue they make by preying on Australians with real addiction.”

Mr. Wilkie’s email to GetUp members comes shortly after the independent MP delivered an address at the National Press Club saying he would withdraw his conditional support for the Gillard Government if the reforms do not become law before the 2012 budget.

“With the Prime Minister needing support of independent MPs like Mr Wilkie to maintain Government, this kind of warning should be heard loud and clear by the Government – get serious on poker machine reform or risk losing power altogether,” said Mr. McLean.

Mr Wilkie added that the minority government presented a real opportunity to contest the power of the Clubs Association and make the proposed reforms law.

“Problem gamblers can easily lose more than \$1,000 an hour on poker machines. It tears families apart, houses are lost and kids go hungry,” Mr Wilkie wrote in his letter to GetUp’s national membership. “That’s why the machines are referred to as the ‘crack cocaine of the gambling industry.”

“In return for my support the Prime Minister, Julia Gillard, agreed to introduce a mandatory pre-commitment scheme on poker machines in 2014, to fit the machines with cost-of-play displays and introduce a \$250 maximum withdrawal limit on ATMs in most pokies venues.”

GetUp said they were working with Mr Wilkie because the MP believed the power of the Clubs Association was strong enough to possibly sway the PM to break her commitment.

“There’s a massive PR campaign brewing, and the Clubs Association will say that any reform will spell the end of clubs and their community support,” Mr McLean said. “We don’t want to end gambling altogether but we know poker machines are designed to be addictive and we have to help those with these addictions.”

“We don’t have the money or influence of the Clubs Association but what we do have is the power of the people and our petition will show that.

***For further information or to arrange comment from GetUp, please contact:
Sam Mclean – 0425 44 55 11 | Paul Mackay – 0415 182 402 | media@getup.org.au***

ANDREW WILKIE'S EMAIL TO GETUP MEMBERS

-- The gambling industry has just launched a \$20 million campaign to try and scuttle reform on pokies. That's why we're teaming up with Independent MP Andrew Wilkie and our friends at Avaaz to launch a huge national petition in support of reforms that could help families affected by problem gambling. Can you [add your name today](#), and forward Mr. Wilkie's message below to friends and family? --

Dear #FIRSTNAME#,

Problem gamblers can easily lose more than \$1,000 an hour on poker machines. It tears families apart, houses are lost and kids go hungry. That's why the machines are referred to as the 'crack cocaine of the gambling industry.'

In this Parliament we have our best chance ever to tackle the problem on account of the agreement for reform I have with the Government.

But the powerful Clubs Australia has just announced that it will spend \$20 million to stop that happening. And we all know what the mining industry achieved with its \$20-million advertising campaign against the super profits tax last year.

It will take a committed effort to win this fight. Let's give it an enormous boost with a huge national petition to show my colleagues and the media that **while Clubs Australia has the money, we have the people.**

I'll launch the petition with GetUp at the National Press Club today and present it to the Prime Minister when we reach 100,000 names. Please add your voice and forward this to everyone you know.

www.getup.org.au/campaign/pokies

A mother recently gave a searingly honest account of her rapid descent into pokies addiction at the Joint Select Committee on Gambling Reform I chair. She had gambled all her life without a problem but that changed when she was introduced to poker machines.

In her words, she changed from a happy-go-lucky, socially-active mother and friend to a restless, isolated, depressed and suicidal woman. The nurse spent her days gambling on pokies, only breaking to pick up the kids from school and grab less than two hours' sleep before heading to work the night shift in ICU. I have heard countless variations of this story during my years pushing for action on poker machines.

These personal stories are the reason I put pokies reform high on the agenda in my negotiations with Julia Gillard and Tony Abbott after the 2010 Federal election. In return for my support the Prime Minister, Julia Gillard, agreed to introduce a mandatory pre-commitment scheme on poker machines in 2014, to fit the machines with cost-of-play displays and introduce a \$250 maximum withdrawal limit on ATMs in most pokies venues.

So, if I have the Prime Minister's word, why am I continuing to push and why am I asking you to join me? For the same reason that Clubs Australia committed last week to one of the biggest political advertising campaigns this country has ever seen. Because the fight is not yet won. Some MPs have even told me that they don't believe strong poker machine reform will ever happen: they simply can't believe that an industry this powerful, with this much money at its disposal, could ever lose.

It will take a huge public movement to stop the powerful gambling lobby from getting its way. I hope you'll be part of it, and that you'll ask your friends and family to join too:

www.getup.org.au/campaign/pokies

What are we fighting for? The Productivity Commission has recommended mandatory pre-commitment as the way to help problem gamblers, calling it a 'strong, practicable and ultimately cost-effective option for harm minimisation'. Mandatory pre-commitment simply means that pokies players, before they start gambling, must set the maximum amount they are prepared to lose.

The industry scare campaign will tell Australians that the reforms we propose are 'big brother'. Wrong. **Mandatory pre-commitment doesn't mean finger-printing or excessive ID requirements.** It requires about the same ID as it takes to enter a club, and gives Australians a choice about how much to gamble.

I'm not a wowser. This is not about stopping people playing poker machines. This is about stopping problem gambling.

The industry spends millions of dollars designing poker machines to be as addictive as possible - to give problem gamblers as little chance as possible to kick a habit that can destroy families. **I believe in giving those families simple tools to help them make their own choices.** That's what mandatory pre-commitment does.

www.getup.org.au/campaign/pokies

The clubs industry is one of the most powerful in Australia. Its political influence is impossible to overestimate, and it will fight to the last penny to keep making a fortune at the expense of Australian families.

It'll say that reform will mean the death of clubs and the communities they support. But this multi-billion dollar industry has more than \$20 million to run a PR campaign. And buried in that \$20 million disinformation fund are the stories of where the money has come from - kids going hungry, homes being lost, families destroyed, crime and suicide.

The industry will say that it already does what it can to avoid problem gambling. But if that's true and their venues have no problem gamblers, it has nothing to lose from reforms to tackle problem gambling.

Clubs Australia believes it can buy and lie its way out of reform. It can't. With your support we can prove the industry wrong.

Let's start this week with a huge national petition to show my colleagues and the media that while Clubs Australia has the money, we have the people. **I'll launch the petition with GetUp at the National Press Club today and present it to the Prime Minister when we reach 100,000 names.** [Click here to add your name on GetUp's website](#), and please don't forget to forward this to everyone you know.

Thank you,
Andrew Wilkie MP,
Independent Member for Denison