

# Poking the Pokies

Well, I guess I have to agree with the Greens on something ☐



Consider that which is being proposed this week by Greens MP Kim Booth – legislating that electronic pokie machines shall only be licensed if they implement a \$1 bet limit.

It's a simple measure, but so very very effective against problem gambling. Instead of losing >\$1000 per hour, losses are reduced to a \$100 or so. It doesn't stop people gambling, but it does reduce the harm. In 2011 Andrew Wilkie talked about all this at the Cathedral's Friday Forum.

There's a couple of things I don't get:

1. Why does *anyone* think that unrestricted pokies are a good idea? Seriously, to have machines in which are basically money harvesters of the Sheriff of Nottingham variety is just plain stupid. And this isn't about freedom. Pokies would still exist. And if people really did want to donate their money to Federal, or to the State Government, I'm sure they'd be allowed to.
2. Why on earth are the Liberals not backing this move? It would be an excellent rub in the fact for the State Government. It could be played as sound economic management (removing fiscal dependency on gambling, stimulating middle class consumption [that \$200+ million would be free to be spent...], etc. etc.), and they have a track record of supporting such measures. If they get in the tent on this one they could tweak it to make it a

bit more palatable (exceptions for the two casinos for instance) but still achieve a good aim.

So I'll say it, for the first time in a long time, I hope the Greens win this vote. And I hope the Liberal and Labor parliamentarians get enough fortitude on this issue to take it through to the end.