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MEDIA RELEASE

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POKIE NUMBERS WILL NOT RISE UNDER NEW LAWS

Claims made today that the total number of gaming machines in NSW would rise under proposed new laws are wrong, Minister for Racing Paul Toole said.

The claims ignore the Government's proposal to cap the number of gaming machines in high-risk areas at existing levels for the first time, Mr Toole said.

"About 20 per cent of NSW will become a 'no go' zone for additional machines, ensuring the number of machines in these high-risk areas can only ever fall," Mr Toole said.

Under the Government's proposals, a limited leasing scheme would operate for 11 per cent of all machines, as an alternative pathway for small pubs and clubs to reduce their gaming machine numbers or go "pokie-free".

All leases would need to be approved by the Independent Liquor and Gaming Authority, and will be subject to a re-invigorated Local Impact Assessment (LIA) scheme including the cap on gaming machine numbers in high-risk areas. The leasing scheme will be reviewed after three years.

"Additional machines will not be able to move into high-risk areas, whether they are traded or leased," Mr Toole said.

Mr Toole said forfeiture remained a key plank of the Government's approach to harm minimisation, however it is one of a number of initiatives.

"A reinvigorated LIA scheme, tightly-defined eligibility for leasing and a new Responsible Gambling Fund levy on leases will ensure that gambling-related harms continue to be effectively managed," Mr Toole said.

Submissions made to the LIA review show that some proposals put forward by community groups were adopted, as were some proposals put forward by industry. Equally, there were proposals put forward that have not been adopted by the Government.

"Claims that the legislation looks like it was written by the industry completely ignores the content of the bill and the submissions," Mr Toole said.

Other provisions of the new legislation include:

- More focused LIA assessments using ABS statistical zones, not council areas, with a strong focus on socio-economic factors.
- Broader community consultation on gaming machine applications for longer periods.
- Directing LIA community contributions through the Responsible Gambling Fund with a mandate that the money be spent locally.

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