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WILKIE AND XENOPHON FAIL TO READ THE FINE PRINT OF AGREEMENT WITH PRIME MINISTER

Clubs Australia says it hopes Andrew Wilkie will use his flight to Western Australia today to carefully read the terms he signed off on in his agreement with the Prime Minister 16 months ago.

The agreement commits the Federal Government to an “evidence based approach to problem gambling”, a position also recommended by the Productivity Commission in its 2010 gambling report.

Andrew Wilkie has repeatedly claimed that the evidence of mandatory pre-commitment is contained in the Productivity Commission’s 2010 report. However the report contains no evidence and recommends a trial of mandatory pre-commitment be conducted in a state or territory to test its effectiveness.

Clubs Australia Executive Director Anthony Ball said that it was not too late for the Government to work with clubs to have a full and proper trial of the technology.

“At the behest of Independent MP Andrew Wilkie, the Government is planning to introduce a \$3 billion scheme without any evidence that it will actually help problem gamblers.

“The agreement between Andrew Wilkie and the Prime Minister states that any approach taken must be evidence-based and consistent with the recommendations of the Productivity Commission.

“The introduction of mandatory pre-commitment without even a trial would be a sizeable breach of the very clear terms Andrew Wilkie signed with Julia Gillard in September 2010.

“The same agreement also stipulates that an independent study be commissioned to establish the impact of a reduction in problem gambling on other revenue flows and individual spending behaviour. This report was due by the end of 2011. The failure of Andrew Wilkie to produce this report is the first breach of his agreement with the Prime Minister on gambling reform.

“It’s clear the barrier to a trial of mandatory pre-commitment is Andrew Wilkie. The Productivity Commission recommended a trial and yet 18 months on clubs stand alone in supporting a trial,” he said.

Mr Ball said the agreement between Mr Wilkie and the Prime Minister should also be high on the reading list of Senator Xenophon.

“If Nick Xenophon read the agreement, he would find no mention of \$1 max bets. This should please him greatly given he has over the past 10 years repeatedly opposed \$1 max bets and lower jackpots.

In 2002, Senator Xenophon told the Adelaide Advertiser that he was concerned that players ‘being drip-fed with small jackpots’ would be encouraged to play longer.

His 2009 submission to the Productivity Commission described the two-tiered approach of \$1 max bets combined with mandatory pre-commitment as undermining the effectiveness of such a strategy.

Following the Wilkie/Gillard deal, Senator Xenophon told the ABC’s Radio National that mandatory pre-commitment was a “far better result” than \$1 max bets.

“It’s clear that Nick Xenophon will support any policy that damages clubs. He needs to explain why he has suddenly backflipped on \$1 max bets and mandatory pre-commitment and is seemingly uninterested in evidence based reforms,” he said.

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