



## Standing Committee on Justice and Community Safety

### **Inquiry into Cashless Gaming in the ACT** **ANSWER TO QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE**

Asked by Dr Marissa Paterson on 27 March 2024: Aino Suomi from the ANU Centre of Gambling Research took on notice the following question:

Reference: Hansard [uncorrected] proof transcript 27 March 2024, page 43:

In relation to:

**DR PATERSON:** Aino, do you have any more thoughts?

**A/Prof Suomi:** I guess there are two decisions if you have breaks in play. It is about after how much time, so is it after one or two or three hours, which is another timeframe used in Victoria, for example, and then how long the break is. I guess the evidence in terms of how long the break is—the longer the break, the better, of course, but then there is some—and I might have to get back to you about the details of that research. I think I put them in one of my submissions as well, but in it, that kind of two decisions are made. As Sally said, there are all sorts of reasons why it works. Whether it can be implemented through the account-based system—you know, it is how sophisticated you want the system in place.

ANU Centre for Gambling Research: The answer to the Member's question is as follows:—

#### **Duration of continuous play before break is implemented**

Our analysis of Australian data shows that after 40 minutes of continuous EGM play, the risk for experiencing gambling harm significantly increases (Dowling et al., 2022). In New Zealand, gaming machines are required to have a design feature that interrupts play at irregular intervals not exceeding 30 minutes of continuous play through pop-up messaging, and informs the player of the duration of their session of play, the amount of money the player has spent and net wins and net losses during the session of play (du Preez et al., 2016).

#### **Duration of the break that is implemented:**

The evidence of the optimal break is limited, but recent data from Norway shows 15 minutes is more effective in reducing gambling harm, compared to 1.5, 2 or 3 minutes, and the longer the break, the more effective its harm reduction utility (Hopfgartner et al., 2023). Recent study from Britain provides evidence about the effectiveness of a 60 minute break on subsequent overspending (Auer & Griffiths, 2023). Other research shows that if breaks in play are implemented without warning messages, gambling urge increases during the break and can lead to more excessive gambling (Blaszczynski et al., 2015). The CMS, or other similar infrastructure, will provide the necessary

infrastructure to implement breaks in play with appropriate harm minimisation measures, alongside data gathering and sharing. The absence of CMS exposes the ACT community to a disproportionately high risk of gambling harm.

I conclude that breaks in play should be part of other harm minimisation measures implemented through an account-based system, with mandatory and universal precommitment through a CMS or similar infrastructure.

### References

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Dowling, N. A., Youssef, G. J., Greenwood, C., Merkouris, S. S., Suomi, A., & Room, R. (2022). The identification of low-risk gambling limits for specific gambling activities. *Journal of Gambling Studies*, 38(2), 559-590.

Hopfgartner, N., Auer, M., Santos, T., Helic, D., & Griffiths, M. D. (2023). Cooling off and the effects of mandatory breaks in online gambling: A large-scale real-world study. *International Journal of Mental Health and Addiction*, 1-18. *bling Studies*, 32(2), 789-800.

Palmer du Preez, K., Landon, J., Bellringer, M., Garrett, N., & Abbott, M. (2016). The effects of pop-up harm minimisation messages on electronic gaming machine gambling behaviour in New Zealand. *Journal of Gambling Studies*, 32, 1115-1126.

Approved for circulation to the Standing Committee on Justice and Community Safety



Signature:

Date: 10/4.2024

By ANU Centre for Gambling Research, Associate Professor, Aino Suomi

