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ANTI POKIE LICENCE RALLY DRAWS 800 PEOPLE

More than 800 people have packed the South Tweed Sports Club in support of a rally protesting against the Federal Government's planned mandatory pre-commitment technology on all poker machines across Australia.

With the Club's auditorium packed thirty minutes before the rally started, organisers were forced to broadcast the speeches on the Club's in-house television system so as to allow everyone a chance to share in the rally.

Member for Richmond Justine Elliot addressed the crowd, and attempted to explain why the Federal Government was supporting technology that requires poker machine players to register for a card before they play.

Member for Moncrieff Steven Ciobo also spoke, telling the 800 strong audience that Ms Elliot needed to start representing local people on the issue instead of simply representing Julia Gillard.

Other speakers included local entertainer Greg Doolan, NSW Business Chamber Regional Manager John Murray and Mark Williams, an employee of the Twin Town Club for the past 22 years.

Clubs Australia Executive Director Anthony Ball said the turnout was remarkable and had been organised in just one week.

"The atmosphere at the Club was electric. I have been to political rallies with 15,000 people and I can honestly say I have never seen anything like what we saw at South Tweed Sports.

"There wouldn't be a politician anywhere in Australia that wouldn't have been moved by what they heard and saw. Ordinary Australians, people of all ages, people who were truly angry that their club is now facing a multi-million bill for technology that will most likely send them broke.

"We heard how clubs support the RSL, how clubs support live entertainment, how clubs generate \$75 million for local small businesses. All this is now in grave danger of being stolen from the people of the Tweed simply because the Prime Minister needs the vote of the Independent MP Andrew Wilkie.

"Arguably the most compelling moment of the rally was a speech by a club employee who spoke of his experience with addiction. He explained to the audience that a problem gambler will not be helped by a mandatory pre-commitment system because the system offers nothing in the way of education, counselling and support.

"I can only hope Justine Elliot was listening because in just a few minutes he identified exactly why the Federal Government's licence to punt is destined to fail in its supposed intention of reducing problem gambling.

"Unfortunately by the time the proof is on the table that this technology is a multi-billion dollar lemon, the local club industry will have been decimated with no way of turning back the clock," he said.

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