



FATHER RILEY: THE MOTHER OF ALL SELL-OUTS

Independent Senator for South Australia, Nick Xenophon, says he is shocked and disappointed Father Chris Riley has sided with the poker machine lobby, rather than supporting reforms to help problem gamblers.

Senator Xenophon has called on Father Riley to immediately disclose how much his organisation, Youth Off The Streets, receives in donations from Clubs each year, and what discussions he's had in recent times with the poker machine lobby over the reforms and his statements released today.

"I've always held high respect for Father Riley and the work he does, but he seems to have bought the poker machine lobby's lies, hook, line and sinker," Nick said.

Senator Xenophon says the suggestion that counselling and education is the fix-all solution to problem gambling is "completely misinformed and runs counter to the independent research of the Productivity Commission".

"Isn't it better to have a fence at the top of the cliff, rather than an ambulance at the bottom of the cliff?" Nick asked.

Senator Xenophon has today written to Father Riley, pointing out the key aspects of the proposed reforms, including \$1 maximum bets.

"It's extraordinary that Father Riley has fallen for the Clubs' misleading \$3 billion figure to convert poker machines to pre-commitment technology, when the Independent Gambling Authority of SA says it would cost just \$1000 per machine and next to nothing for machines being manufactured now," Nick said.

"What's even more staggering is that Father Riley has come out opposing \$1 maximum bets per spin, which would limit losses to an average of \$120 per hour, rather than the current average of \$1200 per hour."

"Does Father Riley really think it's okay for people to lose \$1200 per hour on poker machines?" Nick asked.

Senator Xenophon also says the myth being perpetrated by the Clubs, and now Father Riley, that the proposed gambling reforms will result in job losses, is entirely misleading.

A report commissioned by the Tasmanian Department of Treasury, prepared by the South Australian Centre for Economic Studies, found that gambling facilities employ an average of 3.2 persons per \$1 million lost on poker machines. This compares to double that in retail and 20 persons employed per \$1 million in meal and food sales.

"Poker machines are a job killer, not a job creator," Nick said.

"Besides, is Father Riley really arguing that being able to continue to prey on problem gamblers is a reason to stay in business?"

"I know some commentary has portrayed Father Riley entering this campaign as an 'Ace' for the poker machine lobby. But, given Father Riley's stand and potential conflict of interest, I see it more as the 'Joker' card," Nick said.

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