

# JENNY MACKLIN MP

Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services  
and Indigenous Affairs

## TRANSCRIPT

Interview with Fran Kelly, Radio National  
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**E & OE – Proof only**

**Subject: Poker machine reform**

FRAN KELLY: Well the Labor Government has a bag full of problems too, on the policy front mostly. And the Families Minister, Jenny Macklin, will meet State and Territory Gaming Ministers today to discuss poker machine reform. She'll ask the States to support Andrew Wilkie's plan for mandatory pre-commitment technology on the poker machines to try and ease the pain of problem gambling. But chances of a deal aren't great. Earlier this morning on Breakfast we spoke with the Victorian Gaming Minister, Michael O'Brien.

MICHAEL O'BRIEN: The Federal Government are going into an area where they have had no Constitutional responsibility in the past and it's borne out of the deal where Prime Minister Gillard needed to secure Andrew Wilkie's vote. It's more about propping up the Federal Labor Government than it is about helping problem gamblers.

FRAN KELLY: So you won't sign on today?

MICHAEL O'BRIEN: We won't sign on today. Not if mandatory pre-commitment is part of it.

FRAN KELLY: That's Victorian Gaming Minister, Michael O'Brien speaking to us here on Breakfast earlier this morning. Jenny Macklin welcome to Breakfast.

JENNY MACKLIN: Thank you Fran.

FRAN KELLY: Minister you heard then 'no deal'. Will you be changing your approach at the table today on the pre-commitment given those comments from Michael O'Brien?

JENNY MACKLIN: I have had productive discussions with all my State and Territory colleagues and the one thing that everyone agrees to, including the industry, is that pre-commitment is a useful tool and especially useful for helping problem gamblers. So I think one of the things that we can agree on is that we should now start to make sure that pre-commitment technology is available on all our machines, poker machines, across Australia and available for all players.

FRAN KELLY: Well just on that Michael O'Brien won't have a problem with that because he said the Victorian position is to have pre-commitment available across all machines but on a voluntary basis. People sign on to it voluntarily. Could that work?

JENNY MACKLIN: I'll come to the voluntary bit in a minute. There is a big difference between us on these issues, but just on the point about making sure that pre-commitment technology is available everywhere, the fact that everyone agrees with that is an important first step. That means that the issue of getting the technology on the machines can start. Let's get that started. Let's make sure that it is available and we'll keep discussing the issues around voluntary versus mandatory. The problem with the Victorian approach is that you could go and take a card into a venue, start playing, set a limit as to how much you want to play, but when you reach your limit, you can just take your card out, stay even on the same machine at the same venue, and keep playing. And that's exactly what we're trying to help problem gamblers prevent.

FRAN KELLY: Well Michael O'Brien says that he runs a counter-argument. He says the problem with your plan is that the pre-commitment technology cards aren't linked. Under Victoria you have one card ...

JENNY MACKLIN: Well that's just wrong.

FRAN KELLY: And you can go from club to club and you're locked into a limit.

JENNY MACKLIN: Well he's wrong. We've always been clear that we support a venue linked system as do the Victorians. They do support a venue linked system. The problem with what he's proposing is that you can just take your card out even in the same venue and keep playing. So it's not actually going to help the problem gambler. It's like saying to people, well the seat belt's in your car but you don't have to use it.

FRAN KELLY: Well Michael O'Brien's other major concern about the approach the Federal Government's taking with this is he says you're just trying to do something to get yourself out of a political fix, pushing ahead with pokie reform because of your political needs, rather than the best policy outcome. And he says proof of that is that you're looking at pre-commitment technology but not the other suite of measures that say Victoria has put in place, like banning ATMs from venues. It's true isn't it? You're not looking at a general suite of change, are you?

JENNY MACKLIN: No, that's not right either. It's unfortunate that he's taking this approach when he knows from the papers he has in front of him for the meeting today, we have a number of items on the agenda. One is dynamic play display warnings. ATM limits on how much you can take out of an ATM at a venue, online gambling, the issue of gambling when a match is on. So all of these issues are in fact on the agenda today. We understand how important it is to act on a number of fronts. It was the Government, this Government, that actually asked the Productivity Commission to do a major review into the most effective way to address problem gambling. They recommended that we introduce mandatory pre-commitment. That's what we're doing.

FRAN KELLY: Will you get agreement? Because if you don't there's a political imperative in this for you. Andrew Wilkie supported your Government to form Government and that support is based on you getting these pokie reforms through.

JENNY MACKLIN: That's right. And what we've said is that we will continue to discuss these issues with the States and Territories. But we will also now proceed to develop Commonwealth legislation. We have quite a bit of time to do that, so we've got time to continue to methodically work through these issues with the States and Territories and by this time next year we will need to have Commonwealth legislation ready.

FRAN KELLY: Do you think you will end up with the Commonwealth overriding the States though? Do you think you'll get, I mean is it possible to get compromise and are you seeking compromise? For instance, on the voluntary notion which would seem to be a good place to start, and also perhaps on some kind of compensation for the States, because not only do they lose gambling revenue through this, there's also cost for the clubs in putting the technology in place?

JENNY MACKLIN: The evidence from the trials of voluntary pre-commitment is that they just don't get enough people signing up. So only about one per cent of people sign up. That's why we're going down the path of mandatory pre-commitment, to try and help those problem gamblers who

really do need assistance with setting and sticking to their own limits. What we also know is that the Commonwealth certainly can legislate but if I can get an agreement with the States, I've made it very clear to all of them, that that's my preference.

FRAN KELLY: Are you hopeful of that?

JENNY MACKLIN: I am hopeful.

FRAN KELLY: Confident?

JENNY MACKLIN: I am.

FRAN KELLY: Are you confident, let me put it that way?

JENNY MACKLIN: I'm hopeful because I think that that would be the most effective way but I am making it very clear to the States that we intend to pursue a system of mandatory pre-commitment because we think that that would be most effective in dealing with problem gambling.

FRAN KELLY: Can I just interrupt you there because we're almost out of time and what is clear is that Tony Windsor is a vote you'd probably need to get this through, is not going to support it. He said that again last night.

JENNY MACKLIN: Well of course we'll continue to talk with all of the Independents about this issue and I think the most important issue for all of us to remember is, it's incumbent on us to act on problem gambling. We have a serious issue in Australia, an average of \$21,000 a year being lost by problem gamblers. That is a lot of money by anybody's standards and I think we should do something about it to assist those problem gamblers, and their family, to address what we know is causing so much distress.

FRAN KELLY: Jenny Macklin, thank you very much for joining us.

JENNY MACKLIN: Thank you.

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