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Research Shows Pokies Ring Up Lower Spend Than Smokes and Grog

Data provided at this weekend's Australasian Gaming Expo in Sydney shows household leisure spending on gambling is lower than other forms of leisure and entertainment, including alcohol, cigarettes, lollies and takeaway food.

Data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics, the Office of Economic Research and the gaming industry shows Australians are more likely to spend their disposable income on books, newspapers and magazines, mobile phones, wine and beer than gambling.

Data showed the average percentage of total household discretionary spend on gambling was just 0.6 per cent of total income, compared with meals eaten outside the home, including fast food, at 4.7 per cent.

Other big discretionary items that ranked above gambling include tobacco (1.3 per cent), confectionery (1.1 per cent), beer (1.0 per cent), books and newspapers (1.0 per cent), and wine (0.7 per cent).

Chief Executive of the Gaming Technologies Association (representing gaming machine manufacturers), Mr Ross Ferrar, said "Playing poker machines, which make up 39 per cent of the gambling dollars spent, is a popular leisure activity undertaken by many people who have a higher level of discretionary expenditure.

"Australians spend \$12 a week playing poker machines. We are delighted that people are finding great enjoyment in playing poker machines and the industry is working hard to create even more entertaining games for them", he added.

Mr Ferrar said "While entertaining more than one million Australians a week, we are providing state of the art safeguards for the less than 1 per cent who may experience gaming problems. These safeguards include on-screen clocks and dollar amounts on all new machines".

The machines are electronically monitored and forensically audited against a vast array of standards, legislation and regulation – making gaming arguably the most stringently governed leisure activity in Australia.

Mr Ferrar cited recent research findings from the Centre for International Economics, which found that "removing the gaming machine industry would reduce employment throughout Australia by 140,000 people and reduce gross domestic product (GDP) by \$13.5 billion annually."

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