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## **Responsible gambling features trialled in Queensland show promise**

Minister responsible for Gaming Paul Lucas has welcomed the University of Sydney's findings from an Australian-first trial, which show that gamblers react to responsible gambling features.

"This trial is a great start in terms of seeing what does and doesn't work when it comes to harm minimisation," Mr Lucas said.

"The Queensland Government supports voluntary pre-commitment but we believe more research is required before other solutions, such as those proposed by the Federal Government can be considered."

The report, *Blue Gum Gaming Machine: An evaluation of responsible gambling features*, suggests a range of harm minimisation features could be potentially effective.

### Trial conclusions

- Voluntary harm minimisation features seemed to negatively affect the enjoyment of problem and 'at risk' players but had no real impact on the experience of the majority of recreational players;
- Problem gamblers appeared to be more sensitive to responsible gaming interventions and messages than other players;
- The 'Bank' meter could be effective in reducing problem gaming if appropriately tailored while the Demo play mode could be useful for some in facilitating 'breaks' from play; and
- The clocks and time limiting was not relevant to players, appearing to have little influence on game play, because most players routinely set and abided by spending limits without mandatory pre-commitment regulations.

Mr Lucas said that despite Queensland having one of the lowest gambling prevalence rates in the country the government is still committed to reducing gambling related harm.

"People have a right to gamble recreationally but if we can find a way to successfully reach out to problem gamblers using measures like this, then that is something we will investigate further.

"I understand Aristocrat are currently evaluating the outcomes of this trial. I will refer its research to the Queensland Gambling Advisory Committee, Queensland Hotels Association and Clubs Queensland for their comments on this important research," Mr Lucas said.

The eight-week trial was conducted by Aristocrat, a gaming technology company, at five Queensland surf lifesaving clubs.

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The responsible gaming features included:

- Special messages and animations encouraging players to gamble responsibly;
- A bank meter to allow players to 'bank' any wins; an alarm clock to help players determine the amount of time they wished to play;
- A "demo play" mode to give players the opportunity to experience the game; and
- A special function that allows players to direct part of any winnings to a registered charity.

The trial was overseen by researchers from the University of Sydney led by Professor Alex Blaszczynski, a nationally recognised expert on problem gambling studies.

Professor Blaszczynski said the report was important because it is the first step in researching additional responsible gaming features for gamblers.

"It appears the responsible gambling features on the Blue Gum machine add additional options to assist gamblers to control their behaviour and make informed decisions," Professor Blaszczynski said.

"The messages on the machine targeted the specific members of the population – problem gamblers – that they were intended to reach."

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