



# FAMILY FIRST



Steve Fielding **Family First** Senator for Victoria

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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## **SENATE INQUIRY TO GIVE AUSTRALIANS A SAY ON POKIES PLAGUE**

Family First is claiming a victory for Australian families with the Senate agreeing to an inquiry into bold new laws to take action against Australia's pokies plague.

Family First leader Steve Fielding said Australians would be able to have their say on the country's poker machine problem.

The statistics on poker machines show the extent of the problem:

- About 293,000 people have a significant gambling problem in Australia and about 85% of problem gamblers use poker machines;
- About 52% of problem gamblers said they had borrowed money and not paid it back, 36% said they had sold property to raise money to bet and 43% said they sometimes went without food to pay for their addiction. One in four suffered divorce or separation and one in 10 had seriously contemplated suicide;
- On average around seven other people are affected by a severe problem gambler's behaviour. That's around 2 million Australians;
- More than 50% of regular poker machine users are problem gamblers or at risk of becoming problem gamblers.

"A Senate inquiry allows families and community groups to comment on Family First's proposed laws and document the impact of poker machine addiction," Family First leader Steve Fielding said.

Family First's *Poker Machine Harm Reduction Tax (Administration) Bill 2008* was referred to the Senate Community Affairs Committee for inquiry and report by 25 June 2008. Senator Fielding urged Australian families to make a submission.

Family First's bill will introduce a new federal tax on poker machines in pubs and clubs to push pokies out of these community venues and restrict them to casinos and racetracks, which are dedicated gambling venues. The tax will be phased in over a number of years to allow businesses to wean themselves off pokie profits. A trust fund will use the tax revenue to help community and sports groups in the transition.

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