

To the Store Manager  
Woolworths

Dear Store Manager,

**Woolworths Poker Machines**

I am a Woolworths customer and a member of GetUp.

I was disappointed to learn that Woolworths is the largest owner and operator of dangerous high-loss poker machines in Australia.

I believe that poker machine gambling takes advantage of addicted problem gamblers and causes significant social harm to addicted problem gamblers, their families and communities affected by problem gambling.

I care about poker machines because:

I understand that Woolworths shareholders have initiated a shareholder motion that would require Woolworths to limit the potential losses from poker machines that the company operates to \$1 per push or \$120 per hour from January 2016 that will be considered at an extraordinary general meeting in November.

I want to let you know that as a Woolworths customer I support the shareholders' resolution and the proposed measures to make poker machines owned and operated by Woolworths safer. I am going to take your decision about the future of the Woolworths poker machine business into account when making my decision about where to buy groceries and liquor.

Could you please ensure that your line manager receives a copy of this letter.

Yours sincerely,

## Instructions:

# What is this letter?

This flier is designed to give you - along with thousands of other GetUp members from across Australia - the chance to use your power as a customer of Woolworths to put pressure on the company about their investment in dangerous, high-loss poker machines.

If you haven't got a specific personal story about the impact of problem gambling you might want to mention the following:

- *Woolworths has the opportunity to lead their industry by making their machines the safest in Australia.*
- *Woolworths' poker machines target socially disadvantaged communities and contribute to economic inequality.*
- *The social cost of gambling addiction to the Australian economy was estimated by the productivity commission at \$4.7 billion annually.*
- *About 40% of the revenue of poker machines comes from problem gamblers.*
- *Currently problem gamblers can lose up to \$1,500 an hour. Under the 1-120 solution Woolworths poker machines would be limited to \$1 a bet or no more than \$120 loss an hour on a single machine.*
- *Poker machines are designed to be addictive.*

Make sure that you deliver your letter before 31st October 2012 so that the feedback can reach Woolworths management in time.

## What to do when you get to the store

Simply go and do your grocery shopping as usual. Choose a staffed checkout counter. When you are finished at the counter, politely ask the shop assistant to take the letter and hand it to their store manager. Ask for them to commit to giving the letter to their store manager or if they won't do that, ask to speak to the store manager in person.

If you aren't sure what to say, you could try:

*"I've written a letter to your store manager asking Woolworths to make the poker machines they own safer. If I give this to you will you make sure that your store manager gets it?"*

Remember that neither the store manager or the shop assistant are responsible for poker machines so be firm, but polite. Woolworths may brief their store managers with the company "line" about poker machines to argue with you or try to convince you that you are wrong. We've prepared a fact sheet so that you know the facts about Woolworths and poker machines, but don't get into an argument. Just ask them to take the letter and pass it on to their line manager. Make sure they know that this is a personal letter from you as a customer and not a generic flier or petition.

**We would love to hear how you go. Feel free to send us an email at [info@getup.org.au](mailto:info@getup.org.au) to let us know how it went.**

## How to use this flier

### Fill in the date

To the Store Manager  
Woolworths

and name of your local Woolworths store.

Dear Store Manager,

### Woolworths Poker Machines

I am a Woolworths customer and a member of GetUp.

I am a Woolworths customer and I was disappointed to learn that Woolworths is the largest owner and operator of dangerous high-loss poker machines in Australia.

I believe that poker machine gambling takes advantage of addicted problem gamblers and causes significant social harm to addicted problem gamblers, their families and communities affected by problem gambling.

I care about poker machines because:

Fill in the reason or reasons why you support Woolworths making their poker machines safer.

I understand that Woolworths shareholders have initiated a shareholder motion that would require Woolworths to limit the potential losses from poker machines that the company operates to \$1 per push or \$120 per hour from January 2016 that will be considered at an extraordinary general meeting in November.

I want to let you know that as a Woolworths customer I support the shareholders' resolution and the proposed measures to make poker machines owned and operated by Woolworths safer. I am going to take your decision about the future of the Woolworths poker machine business into account when making my decision about where to buy groceries and liquor.

Could you please ensure that your line manager receives a copy of this letter.

Yours sincerely,

Write your name and address.

The letter will be more effective if the company knows that it comes from a real person in their local area.

# Woolworths and Pokies: The Facts

## Why Reform?

Australia has the most high-loss poker machines in the world - they are designed to be addictive, are extremely accessible and are facilitating a social problem that has enormous financial and societal costs. According to the Productivity Commission Report, of the \$19 billion gambled by Australians each year, 60% is lost to the pokies. Australia is home to more than 200,000 poker machines and Woolworths owns and operates more machines than any other entity in Australia.

Approximately 600,000 people play the poker machines each week but only 15% of those players account for 40% of all the losses. The 15% represents the "problem gamblers" - people who are addicted to poker machine playing and who are most often the people who can least afford to lose so much. A player can lose an average of \$1500 per hour on a standard Australian poker machine. GetUp research found that Woolworths poker machines were disproportionately located in socially disadvantaged areas.

The productivity commission estimated the social cost of gambling addiction in Australia at \$4.7 billion annually.

Woolworths is Australia's largest single owner and operator of poker machines. Through its subsidiary, ALH Group Pty Ltd, Woolworths owns and operates 12,650 poker machines in venues in Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia. Woolworths own about 6.8% of all hotel and club poker machines in Australia.

Poker machine gambling is big business for Woolworths. Woolworths poker machines generated an estimated \$1,292 million of net gambling revenue in 2010-2011. That revenue represents about 12.4% of total hotel and club poker machine net gambling revenue for the whole country.

## What Reform?

We're asking that Woolworths amend its company constitution so that the machines it owns and operates are safer for users. This means not accepting more than \$1 per spin and not being able to lose more than an average of \$120 per hour. We are also asking for mandatory shutdown periods of six hours per 24 hours.

## Why are we asking for \$1 bet limits?

The Productivity Commission and independent experts recommend \$1 bets and \$120 maximum losses because they target the dangerous product, i.e. the poker machines, and not the person. This was the original reform proposed by the Productivity Commission and was also the reform Andrew Wilkie originally requested from the government. Research shows 88% of recreational gamblers rarely bet more than \$1 per button push, but problem gamblers frequently do. This reform would help reduce losses for problem gamblers – and their families.

## Why doesn't voluntary pre-commitment or self-exclusion work?

In short, people don't use voluntary pre-commitment. The Productivity Commission found that voluntary pre-commitment was not as effective as full pre-commitment. In the three trials of voluntary pre-commitment, the take up rates were less than 1.5%. By any objective measure it is a system that is designed to fail.

## What's the cost of converting high loss machines to low loss machines?

Unlike the majority of countries in the world, Australia does not have any low loss machines. But current high loss machines can be converted to lower loss machines at an estimated maximum cost of \$4000 per machine, according to a report by The Australia Institute.

## What is the human cost of poker machine addiction?

The human cost is often ignored despite being the main reason Australians support poker machine reform. A study in Victoria found that 1 in 10 problem gamblers say they've contemplated suicide because of problem gambling and 1 in 5 people who presented to the Alfred hospital for suicide treatment attributed their feeling to gambling related problems.