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PRE-COMMITMENT TRIALS PUT SA IN NATIONAL SPOTLIGHT

South Australia has cemented its place as the nation's pre-commitment capital, with almost one in five machines now equipped with technology to enable players to set and track their gambling budget.

Gambling Minister Tom Koutsantonis made the announcement while releasing the Responsible Gambling Working Party's *Fourth Progress Report*, which contains the results of two trials.

"The Worldsmart Technology Pty Ltd trial and the ChangeTracker Card trial have given us a unique insight into how patrons use pre-commitment" he said.

"The Worldsmart trial is arguably the largest ever conducted in Australia with 268 people activating Playsmart, the name of the pre-commitment product, at six gaming venues. Another 20 people participated in the trial of the manual ChangeTracker Card.

"The results will inform the development of a national policy, positioning South Australia as a leader in this field.

"The South Australian trials will help to inform the future roll-out of pre-commitment technology across Australia as part of national gambling reforms.

"I look forward to working with the Federal Minister for Community Services, Jenny Macklin, to build on our successful pre-commitment trials through the Council of Australian Governments' Select Council on Gambling."

The progress report says patrons who volunteered to take part in the Worldsmart trial decreased their spending by an estimated 32 percent overall.

"While 32 percent sounds like a significant spending reduction we have to keep the results in perspective," Mr Koutsantonis said.

"The participants in this trial were voluntary, so it is not necessarily indicative of how the whole population will react. However, I believe this is a very promising sign."

Similarly, the key driver in the ChangeTracker Card trial was tracking money spent on gambling. Just over 50% of patrons in this trial used the card every time they played.

"I am pleased to see that the companies involved are rolling out this technology system to 74 venues, covering almost 20 percent of gaming machines across the state.

“It means South Australia will have the largest percentage of hotel and club gaming venues and machines covered in any Australian jurisdiction.

“We will be the only place where a patron’s limits will follow them when they play any machine in any of the 74 Playsmart venues.”

Pre-commitment allows customers to make informed choices about their level of play, giving them the tools to set limits on how much they will spend, and in some cases how long they will play, before they get started.

The trial evaluations are a partnership between the South Australian and Federal governments, through the Minister for Gambling’s Responsible Gambling Working Party.

The Federal Government committed \$260,000 to the evaluations of three trials, with two now completed and one still underway.

The Worldsmart trial, which ran from August 2008 to October 2009, was technology based, involving the addition of limit-setting features to a loyalty card.

Patrons allocated how much they wanted to spend, in what timeframe. They were then sent two separate electronic messages to let them know when they were nearing their budget, and a third when they exceeded their budget.

The ChangeTracker Card trial was carried out in 12 venues over a three month period in 2009.

It involved patrons using a card (similar to loyalty cards offered at cafes) to record their transactions at the cashier.

The card was designed to help patrons keep track of their spending, while promoting budgeting and encouraging more interaction between users and gaming staff.

The third trial by Global Gaming Industries Pty Ltd began in March 2010. It is also technology based with the limit-setting feature added to another loyalty system.

Patrons set a spend limit at the machine each day they play that applies for that day. A beep occurs when they exceed their budget. This trial will finish in 2011.

Note: Copies of the reports and information about the Working Party and the trials is available at: <http://www.treasury.sa.gov.au/responsiblegambling>

The key findings of the two trials are summarised in Chapter 4 of the progress report, as well as the lessons learnt by the Working Party.