



## COMMENT COLUMN

with Kingborough Councillor **Gideon Cordover**

# Pokies cause harm

**During the COVID-19 lockdown, pokies were temporarily turned off.**

For those 96 days between late March and June, it is estimated that Kingborough residents saved \$618,000 that would have otherwise been lost to the pokies.

Since pokies venues have reopened after the COVID lockdowns, the damage is worse than ever before, with July data revealing a 26 per cent increase in pokies losses compared to this time last year.

A large amount of this money is syphoned out of the community and out of Tasmania.

On July 13, I moved in the Kingborough Council for a community engagement to be initiated so that we could find out whether or not the community actually wants pokies in their neighbourhood pubs and clubs.

The average electronic gaming machine takes \$128 from Tasmanians each day.

There are 50 of these harmful machines in Kingborough.

Each day they are open to the public, \$6435 gets washed away by the pokies in our community.

This is money that should have been spent at local shops and businesses.

Too often, it is money that should have been spent on family necessities like food, clothing and items for school.

If a new venue in Kingborough wants to get a licence to operate pokies, they will be required to undertake a Community Interest Test run by the Tasmanian Liquor and Gaming Commission.

The venue would have to advertise in the newspaper, followed by a 14-day period for community stakeholder feedback.

Kingborough Council would be an important stakeholder and would be expected, though not compelled, to make a submission as part of the Community Interest Test either in favour, against or ambivalent.

How will Kingborough Council accurately represent

the majority community view on this matter if council has never bothered to canvas anyone's opinion?

It is entirely possible that from the moment anyone becomes aware of a Kingborough venue wanting to acquire pokies, council will have only 14 days to find out the many community viewpoints, collate the results, draft an official opinion and get it reviewed by stakeholders and approved for submission to the Commission.

We know that it usually takes at least four to six weeks to undertake a meaningful engagement on any issue, let alone one with such significant community interest.

This is why I moved a motion for the council to undertake a community consultation on pokies now, rather than waiting until we only have a fortnight to cram everything in.

Sadly, my motion was lost, with four votes in favour and five votes against.

At some stage, perhaps sooner than we think, this council is going to require a formal position on pokies, because the sands of the gaming landscape in Tasmania are now shifting.

For the first time in 50 years, the monopoly of legal gambling in this state may significantly change in 2023.

Now, more than ever, Kingborough Council needs to know what it will do if a venue applies to have poker machines within our municipality.

Government figures showed Tasmanians lost \$525,000 per day once poker machines were switched back on in June.

Poker machine losses were found to have spiked more than 25 per cent per day since March of this year.

Even though my motion failed to get the support of the majority of Kingborough Councillors, you can still have your say on pokies by writing to your local politicians, including councillors, to let them know where you stand on this important issue.



Feral and stray cats kill wildlife in their thousands every year and impact Tasmania's primary producers. (PS)

# Cat Bill passes without compulsory confinement

**The Cat Management Amendment Bill 2019, which was passed by the Lower House last week, delivers on some of the recommendations of Tasmania's first comprehensive Cat Management Plan and addresses domestic, stray and feral cats.**

Greens spokesperson for the environment and local Member Rosalie Woodruff says one key element was missing from the Bill.

"Despite overwhelming submissions from experts and a wide alliance of stakeholders recommending confinement as the best method for cat control, the government removed this key fix from their Bill," said Dr Woodruff.

Minister for Primary Industry and Water Guy Barnett said "The Bill recognises that we need to get the balance right and that cats, if not cared for in a responsible manner, can have serious impacts on the community, agriculture and wildlife.

"While we encourage cat confinement, we will not make confinement compulsory.

"We have not supported the Green's amendment that would penalise owners thousands of dollars for letting their cat out and burden owners with costs of new enclosures to keep their cats indoors.

"Cat management is a shared responsibility and our focus is on education and creating community awareness of responsible cat management."

Dr Woodruff said that the legislative fix proposed by the Greens would have required owners to responsibly keep their cat from roaming.

"Despite the well-understood risk to wildlife and primary producers, the Labor Party and the Liberals voted against this fix," said Dr Woodruff.

"Only Independent MP, Madeline Ogilvie, voted with the Greens to keep cats contained.

"Feral and stray cats not only kill wildlife in their thousands every year, they also have a serious impact on Tasmania's primary producers and pose a substantial threat to human health.

"A 2015 CSIRO report found that 82 per cent of stray and feral cats studied were infected with toxoplasmosis.

"Toxoplasmosis has human health impacts and has an untold consequences for Tasmania's farms, with the most serious effect being on sheep reproduction."

The Bill does require compulsory de-sexing and microchipping of cats from four months of age, limiting the number of cats allowed to be kept at a property without a permit to four, improvements to better support landholders to control cats on their property, replacing the State Government registration of cat breeders with a permit system to breed cats, and a requirement for all cats to be microchipped and de-sexed before being reclaimed from a cat management facility.

The amendments are the result of consultation with industry, local government, animal welfare groups, environmental and agriculture stakeholders through the Tasmanian Cat Management Reference Group and other processes.

The Bill allows for trapping and seizure of cats on private land, regardless of the proximity to other residences.

Landholders who set traps will be required to check traps at least once every 24 hours and return seized cats to the owner if known, or arrange for seized cats to be taken to a cat management facility within 24 hours of capture.

Primary producers, and those landowners who are more than one kilometre from the nearest residence, will be permitted to humanely destroy a cat that is found on their property.

### ADVERTISEMENT

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If you require assistance on any Federal matter please contact me.

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