[Government asleep at the wheel on poker machine harm](https://www.wesleymission.org.au/about-us/media-releases/government-asleep-at-the-wheel-on-poker-machine-harm" \l "msdynttrid=960YLW-ZaAscbeiD7ijXZTv2wnmdr5C3QRR9qLcR864) **Wesley Mission - June 12, 2025**

Wesley Mission says today’s damning performance audit into the regulation of poker machines in New South Wales is no surprise and proves successive governments have done nothing of substance to reduce gambling harm while losses soar and vulnerable communities pay the price.  
  
The NSW Audit Office report reveals the government has failed to focus its gaming strategy on harm minimisation, has –

\* no targets to reduce gambling losses,  
\* let licence conditions for poker machine venues go unchecked for years.  
  
Wesley Mission CEO, Rev Stu Cameron, says,

“While we didn’t need an audit to know the system is broken, as frontline services have been saying this for years, now it is in black and white: the NSW Government has done next to nothing to reduce gambling harm while clubs and hotels pocket billions.”  
  
“The government has been sitting on the recommendations of its own [**Independent Panel on Gambling Reform**](../IndependantPanelGamblingReform/Roadmap%20recommendation%20member%20table_IPGR.pdf) for over seven months. These recommendations include mandatory cashless gambling to reduce harm and stop money laundering. This inaction privileges the special pleading of a harmful and predatory industry over and above the health and wellbeing of the people of New South Wales.  
  
“The Audit Office’s report confirms what we have been seeing for some time—that the government’s stated commitment to gambling reform and reducing harm is not translated into effective action.”

The Audit report also found:  
- The number of poker machines in NSW has increased since the government took office in 2023

- The Department of Liquor and Gaming’s strategy lacks any clear targets to reduce harm

- The Independent Liquor and Gaming Authority does not routinely review gaming licences once issued        
- High-risk venues are operating with outdated, unchecked licence conditions  
  
Rev Cameron says, “If people were being harmed this badly by alcohol, drugs or unsafe roads, action would be swift. This is a public health crisis and it needs to be treated as such.”  
  
The Audit was tabled just days after new figures revealed poker machine losses exploded to $2.17 billion in the first 90 days of 2025—or $24 million a day. It is estimated some communities are now losing more than $3,200 per person every year.  
  
Wesley Mission is calling on the government to immediately:  
- Introduce mandatory venue shutdowns from midnight to 10am  
- Implement a cashless gambling card with enforceable harm reduction limits  
- Place tighter caps on poker machines in high-risk areas  
  
Rev Cameron reiterated, “These are basic public health protections, not radical ideas. The independent and objective report confirms what we already know. The question now is will the government finally act?”