

# Pokies cash cap doubles

MONIQUE HORE

VICTORIA'S cap on cash payouts on poker machines has been doubled, prompting fears it will send problem gamblers straight back to the slots.

Punters can now pocket up to \$2000 in instant cash winnings, up from \$1000, under gambling law changes that passed parliament last month.

An industry source said venues were "doing cartwheels" because they could increase their profits by more than 15 per cent.

Since 2007, venues have paid out winnings above \$1000 by cheque. Premier Daniel Andrews, then gaming minister, said at the time that this measure reduced the risk of "cash being immediately reinvested into gaming machines".

From today, payouts greater than \$2000 can be made via

cheque or electronic transfer, provided the money cannot be accessed within 24 hours.

Alliance for Gambling Reform director Tim Costello said the "greedy" change would boost the government's tax grab on pokies profits.

The tax is tipped to pour more than \$1 billion into government coffers in 2017-18.

"Daniel Andrews is behaving as a predatory premier," Mr Costello said. "This is against every recommendation for harm minimisation."

"A cash payout would mean they go straight back."

Amendments to gaming laws, passed on November 30, doubled the term of pokie licences to 20 years and locked in pokies numbers until 2042.

Current licences had not been due to expire for five years, and the government has been criticised for rushing through the changes.



**CRANE AND ABLE TO BUILD**

CRANES in the sky are now a familiar sight on Geelong's Malop St.

Techne Development has this week brought in a 40-metre tall tower and 60-metre long boom, as it accelerates work on the new National Disability Insurance Agency headquarters.

They were being manoeuvred by a 200-tonne crane.

The former Carlton Hotel site will host the \$120 million central base for the NDIA.

Work is expected to be completed in late 2018.

Picture: PETER RISTEVSKI

## Tell us where you got cash

MORE than four in five voters want political donations disclosed immediately and all meetings between parliamentarians and lobby groups publicly declared. Two-thirds of Australians also want foreign donations banned, according to an Essential poll published yesterday.

Some 37 per cent of the 1019 people surveyed considered foreign interference in Australian politics a major problem, 36 per cent thought it was a minor problem, and 12 per cent believed it was not a problem at all.

## Pokemon wins \$1 in damages

AN AUSTRALIAN online store must pay \$1 in damages to Pokemon for selling T-shirts featuring its most famous critter Pikachu.

Melbourne-based Redbubble allows artists to sell clothes printed with any designs they wish. After spotting Pikachu and other characters on Redbubble, the Pokemon Company International sued the online store for copyright infringement, seeking more than \$40,000 in damages.

The Federal Court ruled in the Japanese company's favour yesterday, but only awarded \$1 in damages.