

# Crackdown on all-hours pokie pubs and clubs

The State Government will crack down on pubs and clubs that operate as virtual 24-hour casinos in city suburbs.

Eight venues in Brisbane, Logan, the Gold Coast and Townsville have licences to operate pokies until 5.30am. Their opening times vary from 8am to 10am.

Another two in Brisbane and one on the Gold Coast stay open to 4.30am or 5am, again with opening times between 8am and 10am.

Another 118 across the state are open for gambling between 8am and 3.30am. That means some non-casino gaming lounges are open for up to 21,5 hours each day.

Treasurer Andrew Fraser, the minister responsible for liquor licensing, said laws introduced into Parliament this month would severely reduce the hours spent on pokies.

„We don't believe the community supports drinking or gambling before breakfast," Mr Fraser said yesterday.

„That's why – as a major component of our liquor and gaming reforms – no pub or club anywhere in Queensland will be permitted to have their poker machines turned on before 10am.“

The Treasurer confirmed that pubs and clubs would have until December 31 to conform.

„The major reforms passed through the Parliament last week have overhauled the entire licensing system with the introduction of Elevated Risk Permits for serving alcohol after midnight, with two separate regimes for the period from midnight to 3am and then 3am to 5am.

„The requirements for trading in the early hours are now

tougher and many establishments have indicated publicly that they will not be pursuing the new permits.

„As gaming machines can only be operated when the liquor licence is operating, this will reduce gaming machine times also.“

The Sunday Mail revealed this year that Premier Anna Bligh wanted pokies off the breakfast menu.

„It’s time to clamp down. It was never the intention simply to provide hundreds of places across the state where people could start drinking and gambling at breakfast time,“ Ms Bligh said at the time.

The new licensing system would be based on 10am-to-midnight trading.

Mr Fraser said the elevated risk system would assess pubs and clubs that wanted to retain early and late-trading permits as they came up for renewal.

Those venues with regular contact from police and ambulance officers would likely have their hours curtailed.

The Coles-owned Fitzzy’s Loganholme, at Bryants Rd and Pacific Highway, erected new signs this month notifying customers of extended hours for its 40 poker machines.

Fitzzy’s declined to comment and referred all inquiries to Coles headquarters in Melbourne.

Soon after The Sunday Mail’s inquiries, the signs came down last week.

Coles media relations manager Jim Cooper said the company bought Fitzzy’s Loganholme in 2006 and had government approval to trade until 3.30am Wednesday to Sunday.

„We operate the venue responsibly and comply with all the

regulations governing gambling and the sale of liquor," Mr Cooper said.

Logan City's Councillor Darren Power said he was concerned about the pub's extended hours.

„This is just corporate greed," Cr Power said.

„This is doing enormous social damage to our community."

Cr Power said his council was worried about major Brisbane sporting clubs setting up southern bases in Logan and putting hundreds of extra machines into premises.

He said a staff member from a Logan school was recently convicted in court of blowing AUD 200,000 of the school's money on poker machines.

Paul Scully, acting chair of Queensland's Gambling Help Network, said increasing access to poker machines by increasing hours flew in the face of the public mood.

„We feel there is very strong community sentiment, including government, that people do not want to see an increase," Mr Scully said.