

OUTDOOR POKIES CYNICAL PROFITEERING

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Moving gaming machines into outside smoking areas at pubs is profiteering at its worst, and preying on people's addictions, according to Smokefree Coalition Director Mark Peck.

The Kilbirnie Tavern has placed gaming machines in an outdoor smoking area and other pubs around the country may be doing the same.

"It's an extraordinarily cynical move designed to protect the revenue lost when addicted gamblers take a smoke break and have the opportunity to think about the money they're losing," Mr Peck said.

Internal Affairs ordered the machines back inside, but the case was successfully appealed to the Gambling Commission by the machines' operators – the Lion Foundation.

Mr Peck says he finds the Commission's decision bewildering.

"It's a sad day when The Gambling Commission ignores the interests of the weak and addicted in favour of those seeking to exploit them."

Lion Foundation Gaming Compliance Manager Martin Cheer said the foundation was committed to minimising harm within the industry, but Mark Peck said he finds that hard to believe.

"Gaming machine operators have all sorts of well-known strategies to keep patrons playing the pokies, even against their better judgement. If they care so much, why interfere with the ability to get away from the machines momentarily?"

"The worry is that more and more pubs around the country are going to beef up their outdoor smoking areas with gaming machines and the serving of alcohol."

"The saddest thing is that in the end, it's the poor gamblers' families who will pay the biggest price."

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