

# Herald Sun

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## **Pokies addicts to sue for loss**

Danny Buttler, gaming reporter  
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POKIES addicts may sue Tattersall's, Tabcorp, Crown casino and the Victorian Government in an Australian-first class action.

Up to 300,000 problem gamblers and their families have been invited to join the legal battle, which aims to sue for millions of dollars.

The lawsuit would allege that poker machines do not meet the legislated requirement of an 87 per cent return to gamblers.

Action Against Gaming Machines says it is after state governments, gaming machine manufacturers, machine operators and industry associations.

Lana O'Shanassy, who began the legal bid after losing "more than a million dollars" on the pokies, said she had proved, for the first time, that poker machines failed to pay at legal rates.

Ms O'Shanassy said she had used software from the Productivity Commission and poker machine manufacturers to simulate win/loss ratios on electronic gaming machines.

"It's the first in the way it uses solid evidence to base a case. We're not just saying we don't want (pokies) any more," the NSW woman said.

"It's not a legal activity . . . because the evidence shows that gaming machines don't return the legislated minimum of 87 per cent."

But her claims were dismissed as unfounded by poker machine operators, pokies venues and the State Government.

A spokeswoman for Gaming Minister John Pandazopoulos said the Government had put safeguards in place to ensure payouts met the legislated standards.

"The state's independent gambling regulator scrutinises gaming venues to ensure minimum player returns are met," she said.

Clubs Victoria said the claims made on the AAGM website were confused and posed no threat to the Victorian industry.

"We're not concerned because we believe it's unfounded," executive director Mag Kearney said.

"The Gambling Regulation Act does not provide for individuals to take action."

Tabcorp said more than 90 per cent of money put through its poker machines was returned to gamblers.

But Ms O'Shanassy said governments and the gaming industry should not underestimate the legal power of Australia's problem gamblers.

"You're probably well aware that a gambler who's lost their money wants it back," she said.

"If there's a premise there that maybe (they) can get it back, then they will go for it, so there's no trouble getting class (action) members."

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