

# Ban Pokies, Bring Live Music to the Suburbs

## Free weekly gigs and performances. No more pokies on public land.

**Our community clubs are struggling and pokies are moving in.** Decades of the LNP Council underinvesting in community venues, as well as changing local needs, means community clubs struggle to keep the doors open.

There are over 2,000 pokies at 26 publicly-owned Council venues in Brisbane, more than in the Treasury Casino. Pokies at Council venues rip \$163 million away from Brisbane residents every year.

Rich organisations like Brisbane Racing Club are pushing pokies into Council venues in poorer neighbourhoods such as Stafford Bowls Club and Souths Sports Club in Acacia Ridge.

The Greens will ban pokies at venues at Council-owned venues and help 50 venues transform into vibrant hubs of live music, art and hospitality in our suburbs.

By supporting 50 community clubs to reinvigorate their venues, we can encourage more people to spend time in our clubs without relying on predatory and addictive pokies as an income stream.

Our plan will invest \$11 million per year – more than three times what Brisbane City Council currently invests in our community clubs. This plan is only possible if we make developers pay their fair share, which is why the Greens are committed to reversing the LNP's big tax cut for big developers to create a better life in the city for everyone.

### A Greens-led Brisbane City Council will:

- △ **Ban pokies at Council venues** by prohibiting machines under new or renewed leases, removing a total of 2,000 pokies from these publicly owned venues.
- △ **Bring live music and culture to the suburbs** by funding free weekly gigs and performances at 50 community venues, at least one per Council Ward, with our \$6 million per year Suburban Sounds program to bring neighbours together and boost venue attendance
- △ **Breathe life back into our clubs** with our \$5 million per year Rebuilding Clubs infrastructure grants for high-quality kitchens, air conditioning, staging and sound-proofing, and hands-on support from a Council clubs unit.

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### No pokies on public land

New analysis by the Greens shows that Council has allowed an estimated 2,029 poker machines in 26 Council-owned venues across Brisbane.

That is one quarter of all approved pokies in Brisbane (of a total 8,606). It makes Brisbane City Council the biggest “pokies landlord” in Brisbane, with more machines than the Treasury Casino, which has 1,300.

Brisbane residents lose an estimated \$163 million to pokies at Council-owned venues every year.

Public land should be used for the public good, but instead the LNP Council has starved clubs of funds while allowing wealthy organisations like Brisbane Racing Club to turn Council venues into mini-casinos.<sup>1</sup>

Every single poker machine in a Council owned venue takes about \$80,000 out of the pockets of local residents every year. Half of that is from people suffering gambling addictions.

People who have experienced gambling harm speak about how hard it is to find a venue where it's safe for them to spend time with their families, get a meal, or see a gig.

There is a growing movement for family-friendly, community focussed spaces, in both commercial and community venues, which the Greens want to see our Council backing and supporting.

### An orderly pokies phase-out

The State government controls nearly all aspects of pokies regulation, including approving licences and selling “authorities” to install machines. Nonetheless, Council has significant power as the landowner at 26 pokies venues in Brisbane.

A Greens-led Council would take a phased approach to give community clubs time to prepare for the end of pokies – and support them to access new revenue streams to keep the clubs financially viable.

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<sup>1</sup> [Brisbane Racing Club to take over Souths Sports Club with 20-year lease](#)

Under a Greens Council, whenever the lease for a Council venue comes up for renewal or is transferred to another head tenant, a new clause in the lease will ban poker machines on the site.

### The Greens' plan to ban pokies at Council venues:

- △ Council will not sign new leases, renew existing leases or allow leases to be transferred to new head tenants where the tenant organisations operate or derive direct income from poker machines.
- △ Where Council-owned venues are already leased to organisations which operate poker machines, Council will negotiate to either end the lease as soon as possible, or support the organisation to transition away from dependence on pokies.
- △ If a club applies for a DA, material change of use or reconfiguration, Council will seek to make the removal of poker machines a condition of approval.
- △ For clarity, this plan would not penalise venues which merely accept funding from the State Government's Gambling Community Benefit Fund.

### Pokies are expanding under the LNP

The LNP Council tenders vacant clubs “as is” and requires any new tenant to pick up the tab to upgrade neglected sports facilities and run-down kitchens and bars.

Not many genuine not-for-profit community organisations that can afford that. Either big commercial interests sweep in and install pokies – or small not-for-profits are forced by spiralling costs to do it themselves.

Council-owned facilities at Souths Sport Club Acacia Ridge (125 pokies), Stafford Bowls

Club (76 pokies proposed), and Greenslopes Bowls Club, have all been turned over to big pokies operators.

### Rocking the Suburbs

Every year, Brisbane loses more suburban music venues to redevelopment and corporate takeovers of our pubs. **We have a plan to transform community clubs into the pumping hearts of our suburbs, so everyone has somewhere close by to see a show.**

**The Greens' Suburban Sounds program** will invest \$6 million each year in bringing live music, performance and cultural events to 50 venues across Brisbane by:

- △ Providing each eligible venue \$2,500 per week, or \$120,000 per year, to book local artists to perform original work,
- △ Requiring clubs to meet MEAA pay minimums for artists and crew,
- △ Restricting eligibility to not-for-profit organisations who don't operate pokies and book at least one free gig per week, 48 weeks per year and
- △ Providing grants under our Rebuilding Clubs program to pay for new sound and lighting equipment, staging and acoustic upgrades (more details below).



Image: Clubhouse Moorooka

### Rebuilding clubs

The LNP Council has failed in their responsibility to maintain, upgrade and manage our clubs.

The LNP has shifted this burden to groups who largely rely on the resources, experience and capacity of volunteers. **It's a bargain for Council but it's unfair on the clubs and it's unfair on the community.**

To thrive without pokies, we need to provide clubs with meaningful business support and **play catch up on decades of LNP underinvestment.**

Neglected Council owned venues which fail to meet building and accessibility standards not only means clubs struggle to attract patrons, but some locals can't use these venues at all. It also means operators struggle to find sub-tenants.

**The Greens Rebuilding Clubs program will invest \$5 million per year to help breathe life back into our clubs by:**

- △ Providing grants to pay the upfront costs to meet building and accessibility standards, including for building and capital needs assessments and maintenance and compliance works,
- △ Creating a new dedicated Council business unit to be on call to provide not-for-profit clubs with business development advice, help with writing grants and with advocating for planning changes to encourage foot traffic or more public and active transport connections,
- △ Supporting clubs to connect with potential tenants like community organisations, arts and cultural ventures, and hobby groups in their suburbs,

- △ Investigating underwriting insurance for clubs and their tenants, particularly public liability and flood insurance, and
- △ Encouraging active and diverse management committees for clubs with free governance, finance and marketing training, plus support for recruiting committee members.

Some new projects could include retrofitting kitchens and bars with commercial-level energy efficient and gas-free appliances, turning part of the club into a daytime cafe, building new facilities to sublet or hire out, installing new signage or seating, or becoming new community galleries and marketplaces.

Funding would also support clubs who wish to convert under-utilised greens into shady gardens with tree canopies, community gardens or urban farms.

### Won't people just gamble elsewhere?

Evidence shows that proximity to local pokies venues is a key predictor of harmful losses to gambling addiction. Removing 2,029 pokies venues from 26 venues in Brisbane's suburbs will be the single biggest contribution to reducing the toll of gambling addiction in decades.

There will always be some amount of demand for gambling, but modern poker machines are "designed to addict" and target those who can least afford it. It's absolutely unacceptable for Council to accept them on public land.

### Examples of renewal

The Greens would like to see more community clubs supported to follow the model of [Camp Hill Bowls Club](#) and the [Clubhouse Moorooka](#). Both venues have set a great example as family-friendly, pokies-free venues. With

proper resourcing, we can support others to do the same.



Image: Clubhouse Moorooka

These are not the only examples of successful renewal at community clubs, and the Greens wish to thank and acknowledge all the volunteer committee members and helpers who make our clubs strong.



Image: Camp Hill Bowls Club