

19 October 2022

LANDMARK HOTELS AND CLUBS AGREEMENT TO COMBAT PROBLEM GAMBLING

The latest in facial recognition technology will be rolled out in gaming areas of hotels and clubs across NSW to further combat problem gambling.

The AHA NSW and ClubsNSW are advanced in the development of a state-of-the-art system — aimed directly at helping problem gamblers — with dozens of clubs already operating facial recognition systems effectively and trials successfully completed in a number of NSW hotels.

Facial recognition will become a major part of the Multi-Venue Self-Exclusion (MVSE) scheme which prevents problem gamblers from entering gaming areas. Importantly, the technology will have strict privacy protections in place — for example, no licensed venue can access the data, which can *only* be used to enforce self-exclusion in gaming areas.

The roll-out of the technology follows on from a recent survey which found 85 per cent of self-excluded problem gamblers support facial recognition to identify self-excluded people, with the vast majority of those surveyed comfortable with it being used to enforce venue exclusion.

ClubsNSW CEO Josh Landis said facial recognition technology is already in place across multiple NSW clubs and has proven to be effective in preventing self-excluded patrons from accessing gaming machines.

“Close to 100 clubs are already using this technology and the feedback is that it works.

“Clubs have a demonstrated commitment to protecting their members and patrons from gambling harm and this technology will take the world-leading Multi-Venue Self-Exclusion program to the next level.

“Those that have been proactive in choosing to self-exclude from the gaming rooms of clubs and pubs will now have extra support from our industry to make sure they maintain their resolve and stay out of harm’s way. That’s something we can be very proud of,” Mr Landis said.

AHA NSW CEO John Whelan said the introduction of facial recognition follows recent trials in six NSW hotels — and the success of a similar scheme in place in 300 venues in South Australia.

“Technology now allows us to accurately identify self-excluded problem gamblers and then stop them from gambling — this is a powerful tool and NSW hotels and clubs are committed to implementing it,” Mr Whelan said.

“When an excluded person enters a gaming room, their face will be scanned and immediately compared with the faces of all people already in the self-exclusion system. If there is a match, an alert will be sent to the venue within seconds, allowing staff to intervene and prevent gambling. Treatment providers and counselling services will also be alerted and can provide assistance to the patron.”

A key feature of the new system is that, once implemented, it will be state-wide for the first time.

“If you self-exclude from your local suburban club or pub, you will still be detected and prevented from gambling in any pub or club in the CBD or country and regional NSW,” Mr Whelan said

“This is a practical and effective measure backed by self-excluded gamblers and we look forward to seeing its speedy implementation in all hotels and clubs in NSW.”

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Key Facts:

- Facial recognition will be rolled out in gaming areas in NSW hotels and clubs in 2023.
- Rigorous privacy protections will be in place to ensure data is only used for enforcing self-exclusion.
- The system will not retain any personal information collected through facial recognition.
- No hotel or club will have direct access to a person’s data. The venue will only be alerted when an excluded patron tries to enter a gaming area.
- Venues will display clear signage to alert patrons that facial recognition technology is in use.
- Clubs and hotels will comply with all privacy laws.
- 1% of adults in NSW are problem gamblers.

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