## Gaming & wagering

## Pokie makers working on new machines to target gamer generation



By Nick Toscano

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In numbers

\$12 billion - The amount Australians lose to pokies each year

\$715 million - The amount Orown Resorts reaped from pokies last year

\$661 million - The Star's pokie income last year

In a basement workshop in San Francisco, sometime in the 1890s, a young mechanic put the final touches on an intriguing new gambling device: coin-operated, lever on the side, three spinning reels. On each reel were symbols of diamonds, spades, hearts, horseshoes and bells. If two or three of the same symbols appeared in a row, the machine ejected coins. The best combination was three bells, paying out 10 nickels 50 cents.

His creation, similar in size and shape to an old-fashioned cash register, was an instant hit. It was also one of the first recognisable variations of the now-ubiquitous modern slot machine, which

profitable gambling industry in just about every corner of the globe.

Few countries took to the slots as aggressively as Australia, where they are known as poker

Australians lose \$12 billion on them, roughly
\$650 per adult, which goes some way to explaining why certain businesses are feeling increasingly

\$650 per adult, which goes some way to explaining why certain businesses are feeling increasingly nervous about a fast-approaching problem: pokies players are ageing. And young people have no interest in taking their place.

counteract that, gaming machines may well finish up going the

where rising concerns of problem gambling are sharpening a community and political backlash. But with billions of dollars in pokies losses reven desperately after a solution. And now, the search to find one here has officially begun.

GameCo's new casino game machine, based on the movie Terminator 2, was recently launched at Caesars in Atlantic City.

Photo: Supplied

Fairfax Media has confirmed that the Victorian and NSW gambling regulators have received their first applications seeking to roll out a vastly new breed of poker machine so-egaming machines which look and feel more similar to video games, determine payouts based on player ability as well as chance, and are aimed squarely at drawing in millennials.

The applications have been launched by Melbourne pokies manufacturer Wymac, whose founders

developing skill-based games. The move has already drawn problem-gambling concerns about how mixing an element of skill with a game of random ch punters feel over the game.

If the applications are approved, it would mark the most radical overhaul of gaming machines since more than a century ago.

Of course, poker machines have transformed over time. Nowadays they are computerised rather than mechanical, they have buttons instead of levers, they accept bank notes and bigger bets and spin much faster. Unlike their cast-iron -resolution monitors, simulated audio and video effects and pop-culture themes, all intended to make the game as compelling as possible.

put your arse on the seat, sit down

Spencer, a former head of gaming at Orown Resorts and a prominent industry consultant.

Packer's Crown targeting Millennials with gamer pokies

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The introduction of skill-based or video gaming is considered one possible way to combat the pokies

smartphones and computers, the new wave of products feature interactivity and reward players for skill. Some of the products are ordinary poker machine games mixed in with an element of skill. Others include casino versions of puzzles, similar to the popular mobile game Candy Crush, or the classic Pac Man, or sports games and shooter games. Many of them use joysticks or touchscreens and allow for multiple players at once.

manufacturer of skill-based games in and being rewarded for skill and interactivity. These trends will continue until new forms of gaming

Jurisdictions in the US states of Nevada, home to Las Vegas, and New Jersey, home to Atlantic City, have recently passed laws permitting the roll-out of the skill-based slot machines, and they now sit -known casinos, run by the

likes of Caesars Entertainment and MGM Resorts.

Gamblit's Tristation for skill-based gaming machines has been rolled out at several US casinos.

Gamblit says its hardware is now installed at more than 25 locations across the US. One of its popular products is a casino version of the hit mobile game Catapult King, which was developed with Australian developer Wicked Witch Software and has been downloaded 40 million times.

Based on 10,000 exit surveys with players of Gamblit casino games, says Lowenstein, the average age of customers is 36 in Las Vegas, far below the average age of traditional slots players, 58.

-thirds of our player are uncarded not using a player rewards card meaning most casinos see us as a new revenu

regularly lose a lot, and the industry relies hea

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