

Committed to cap - Gaming Minister

By Allan Murphy

NEW regulations would be needed before any formal expressions of interest could be called for a mooted second Victorian casino in Mildura.

In a letter to Sunraysia Against Casinos spokesman Lance Milne, Gaming Minister Tony Robinson said he had a responsibility to ensure that no expressions of interest were called, and no invitations to apply or applications were received, unless those regulations were in force.

Mr Robinson said that under the Melbourne casino licence, the casino operator had an exclusive right to operate a casino in Victoria for six years from the date the licence began and within 150 kilometres for 12 years.

"As these exclusivity periods expired in 1999 and 2005 respectively, there is no longer an im-



Tony Robinson

pediment to the establishment of a second casino licence in Victoria," he said.

However, Mr Robinson said regulations would be required, under the Casino Control Act 1991, prescribing a number of matters including the maximum permissible number of casinos and their permissible locations.

"As part of the considerations for establishing a second casino in Victoria, it should be noted that the government is committed to its cap of 30,000 gaming machines

in Victoria," he said.

"Further, the Premier (John Brumby) has indicated that any proposal to establish a second casino would need to demonstrate economic and social benefits to the community, as part of a comprehensive regional development strategy.

"The Premier has also stated that such a proposal would require strong local and bipartisan support."

Mr Milne said Sunraysia Against Casinos would consider it difficult for the Mildura casino proponents to show any social benefits for putting a "poker machine palace" with more than 200 machines in the middle of Mildura.

SAC also found it "extremely alarming" that a number of councillors were strongly promoting the establishment without any research into its likely social consequences.