



An Australian MP is introducing a Bill focused on banning loot boxes for minors

Longstanding anti-gambling advocate and independent federal MP, Andrew Wilkie, has publicised his intentions to introduce a bill to block loot boxes from being targeted at minors.

Regulator: The Australian Communications and Media Authority (subject to confirmation)

RISK BAROMETER:



JURISDICTION RELEVANCE:

Australia

TIMELINE:

The bill is to be put before the lower house in mid-August

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW:

- Australia has shown itself to be a jurisdiction of concern in terms of the appetite of some politicians to prohibit so-called gambling style mechanics under [The Interactive Gambling Act 2001](#) (IGA). In 2013, former independent senator Nick Xenophon failed to pass the "Virtual Credits Bill," which would have incorporated virtual items and currency into the definition of money's worth.
- In 2018, The Senate Environment and Communications References Committee concluded the world's first "[loot box inquiry](#)". In [response](#), the government took a non-interventionist approach, recognising that the games industry has a significant role to play in protecting consumers.
- More recently, in 2020, Wilkie advocated the "[Interactive Gambling Amendment \(Banning Social Casinos and Other Measures\) Bill 2020](#)" - threatening to amend the IGA to include the term "prohibited social casino service" as a "designated interactive gambling service" not to be provided to customers in Australia.
- The status of this bill has been in question of late, due to, inter alia, the upcoming election taking precedence as well as the official government endorsement, if not publicization, of the Classification Review - launched in December 2019, to harmonise a [fragmented and outdated ratings landscape](#). By prescribing new classification guidelines, this should undermine the

case for outright prohibition.

- But, Wilkie has [publicised](#) his intentions to introduce a more wide-reaching bill which could well supersede the former - The Classification Amendment (Loot Boxes) Bill:
 - » While the full text of the proposed legislation hasn't been provided yet, Wilkie said it would block loot boxes being targeted to minors through classification guidelines.
 - » He argues that video games using the mechanic are grooming young children for "future gambling" and should be tagged with a restricted access 18+ rating - and a warning label.

MOST TELLING:

'To allow very young children to pay cash for a randomised event that may or may not reward them - that would meet any definition of gambling.'

DELANY & CO HOT TAKE:

The advancement of a second bill from Wilkie could be read as a defensive attempt to interfere with the Classification Review. Set against it are factors such as the government's sensible attitude to industry, and the opposition's efforts to focus only on core issues. Nonetheless, it is testament to the continued currency of the loot box issue and a risk that must be taken seriously.