



Pokies, Lotteries, Keno: What is Return to Player?

The 'Return to Player' (RTP) rate is the percentage of the money gambled in games of chance that is required by law to be paid back to gamblers as 'winnings' over time. In formal terms it is referred to as an estimated statistical expectation of the minimum player return.¹ That is, if there was only one gambler they would expect within a specified period to win back this percentage - the RTP - of the money they bet. So if the RTP is 50 per cent, this single gambler could expect to lose, averaged out over many bets, half of everything they bet. The other half would be returned as 'winnings'.

Of course there are actually many, many gamblers, so while the required percentage of money they collectively gamble will be returned at some point, this will not occur evenly between them. The 'player' in RTP refers to the many *players* taken as a collective. As individuals, some may get almost nothing back and some may get back more than they bet. If a few gamblers are big winners, then logically many others must get back less than the RTP. Also note that millions of games may be played before a machine pays out its RTP.

In Australia, RTP is regulated in all states and territories, but the actual percentage returned differs across jurisdictions, and by the form of gambling. The legislated RTP for different types of gambling in Victoria is displayed below.

Legislated Return to Player (RTP) percentages in Victoria by type of gambling

Gambling type	Return to Player percentage (RTP)
Electronic Gaming Machines (EGMs aka pokies)	85 per cent
Keno and Club Keno	75 per cent
Lotteries (Soccer pools)	50 per cent
Lotteries (All other lotteries)	60 per cent

Source: Gambling Regulation Act 2003

Electronic Gaming Machines (EGMs) and RTP

In all Australian jurisdictions, EGMs (or pokies) return between 85 per cent and 90 per cent of money gambled, over time, to the players.² In 2006-07, the average RTP across Australia was about 90.6 per cent.³

¹ Australian/New Zealand Gaming Machine National Standard Version 10.0

² Productivity Commission Report into Gambling, 2010

³ Australian Gaming Statistics 2006-07, Summary tables A and D

In Victoria, EGMs at both venues and the casino must return at least 85 per cent of the total amount that is bet per venue, per annum to players.⁴ This includes jackpot games, where the winnings are payable from jackpot money that accumulates from the takings of jackpot linked machines.⁵

Jackpot linked machines factor the size of jackpots paid to players into the return to player of the machines. This means if a game is connected to a jackpot, the chances of winning prizes on the normal game are reduced slightly as a cost of trying to win the jackpot.⁶

Player information display buttons (PIDs) on EGMs can be pressed to reveal a menu that allows you to search through a variety of information about how the game on the machine works as well as the RTP rate for the particular machine.

It is important to note there is no requirement for an individual machine to return the expected rate in any given period of play – it takes millions of games for a machine to reach its actual RTP rate. So, the amount actually returned to players in any one session, day or week will vary significantly.⁷ Thus assumptions that a machine is 'due' for a big pay out are wrong, even though the sporadic nature of payouts may create the illusion that machines are 'due'. The scale of spins and random payouts is so great this is highly unlikely to be the case even if you were to spend many days continually inserting money into a particular machine.

Keno (including Club Keno) and RTP

Club Keno and Keno are required by Victorian law to return 75 per cent of the amounts wagered to players in prizes.⁸

Lotteries and RTP

A public lottery licensee must ensure that a minimum 50 per cent of the total amount paid by players to enter soccer football pools is returned via winnings. In any other public lottery 60 per cent of the total amount paid by players must be returned via winnings.⁹

More information

[Gambling Regulation Act 2003](#)

[Australian/New Zealand Gaming Machine National Standard revision 10.0, February 2010](#)

[Inside the Pokies - Player Guide, Victorian Department of Justice 2009](#)

Last updated October 2014

4 Victorian Commission for Gambling and Liquor Regulation, *Government announces changes to taxation and return to player rates*, December 2013.

5 Victorian Department of Justice, *Inside the Pokies - Player Guide*, 2009

6 Ibid

7 Productivity Commission Report, 'Gambling' 2010 chapter 11, 11.16

8 *Gambling Regulation Act 2003 (Vic)* ss 6.3.1 and 6A.4.1

9 *Gambling Regulation Act 2003 (Vic)* s 5.4.1