



ALLIANCE FOR
GAMBLING REFORM

2024-25 pre-budget submission

MARCH 2024

Recommendations

This submission recommends urgent government actions be adopted in the 2024-25 Federal Budget:

- » Invest in an independent peak body to reduce gambling harm
- » Adopt key aspects of the Albanese Government's strategy and funding to reduce smoking and vaping and apply them to reducing gambling harm
- » Fund and implement all 31 recommendations from the inquiry to tackle the escalating harms caused by gambling

About this report

The Alliance for Gambling Reform (The Alliance) is pleased to provide this submission to the 2024-25 Federal Budget process. Our submission is focussed on preventing and reducing all aspects of gambling harm in Australia.

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Alliance for Gambling Reform



**ALLIANCE FOR
GAMBLING REFORM**

The Alliance for Gambling Reform is a national peak body which represents a collaboration of organisations with a shared concern about the harmful aspects of gambling and its normalisation in Australian culture. We are a registered health promotion charity.

The Alliance supports public policy and regulatory regimes that make Australia a safer, healthier, and more equitable society by reducing the level of gambling harm.

Introduction

The Alliance for Gambling Reform (The Alliance) is pleased to provide this submission to the 2024-25 Federal Budget process. Our submission is focussed on preventing and reducing all aspects of gambling harm in Australia.

The Alliance has been active in calling for the federal government to implement all recommendations from the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs inquiry into Online Gambling and its impacts on those experiencing gambling harm (the inquiry).

Gambling harm is a public health issue that is rapidly growing and impacting millions of Australians. There is a critical need for an immediate national investment to reduce and prevent gambling harm. The Alliance has worked with people who have lived experience of gambling harm, adopting an evidence-based public health approach in developing the policy positions and proposals outlined in this submission.

This submission recommends urgent government actions be adopted in the 2024-25 Federal Budget:

1. Invest in an independent peak body to reduce gambling harm
2. Adopt key aspects of the Albanese Government's strategy and funding to reduce smoking and vaping and apply them to reducing gambling harm
3. Fund and implement all 31 recommendations from the inquiry to tackle the escalating harms caused by gambling.

The Alliance welcomes this opportunity to provide this brief Pre-Budget submission and would also welcome any further opportunities to provide more detail or discuss any aspect of this submission.

Background – Gambling harm in Australia

Australians lose more to gambling per capita than any other country in the world, with over \$25 billion lost in 2018/19 (the only full financial year data we have since the covid pandemic interrupted land-based gambling). See the below table from The Economist highlighting that Australia's losses per capita are not only the largest, but by a significant proportion¹.

Gambling harm extends beyond addiction, often impacting many people, not just the person gambling. Family members, friends, employers and the broader community can also be harmed by someone else's gambling.

A recent study by the Australian Government's Australian Institute of Family Studies Gambling Research Centre found that of regular gamblers, those who were at the greatest risk of harm are aged between 18 and 34 years².

It is imperative that the Australian Government invests in taking strong action against gambling harm to protect future generations from the financial and social harms caused by our nation's gambling epidemic.

¹ The Economist, The world's biggest gamblers, February 9th 2017, <https://www.economist.com/graphic-detail/2017/02/09/the-worlds-biggest-gamblers>

² <https://aifs.gov.au/media/young-people-most-risk-gambling-harm>

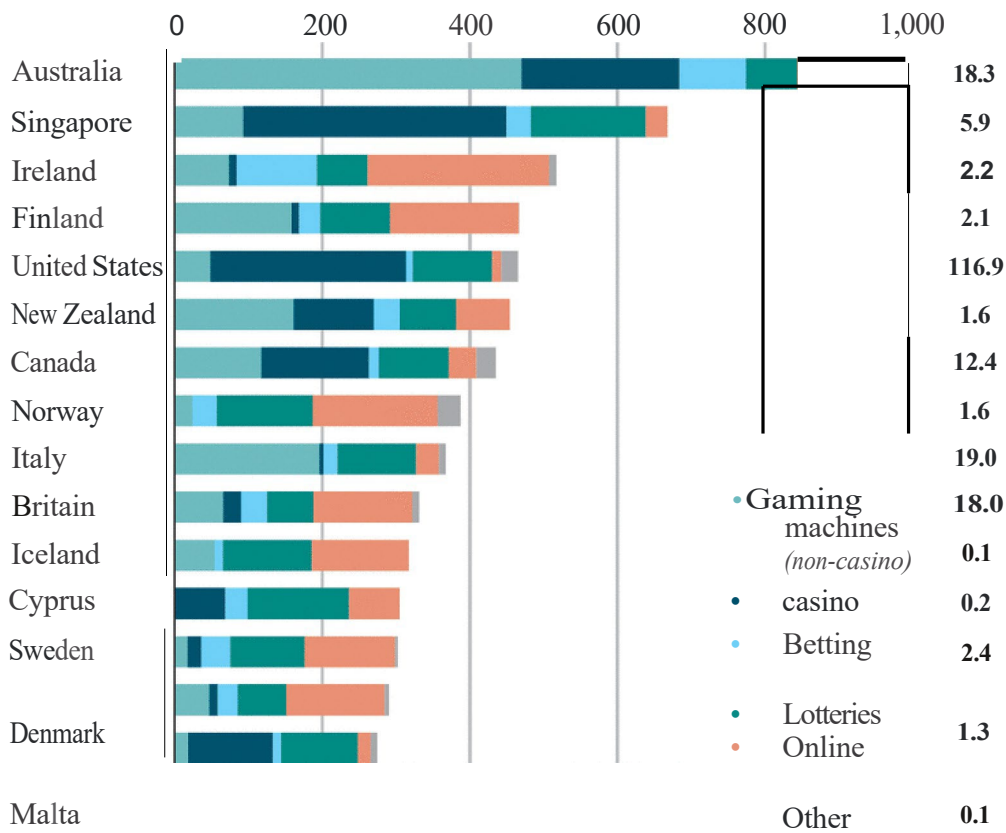
Losing streak

2016 estimate

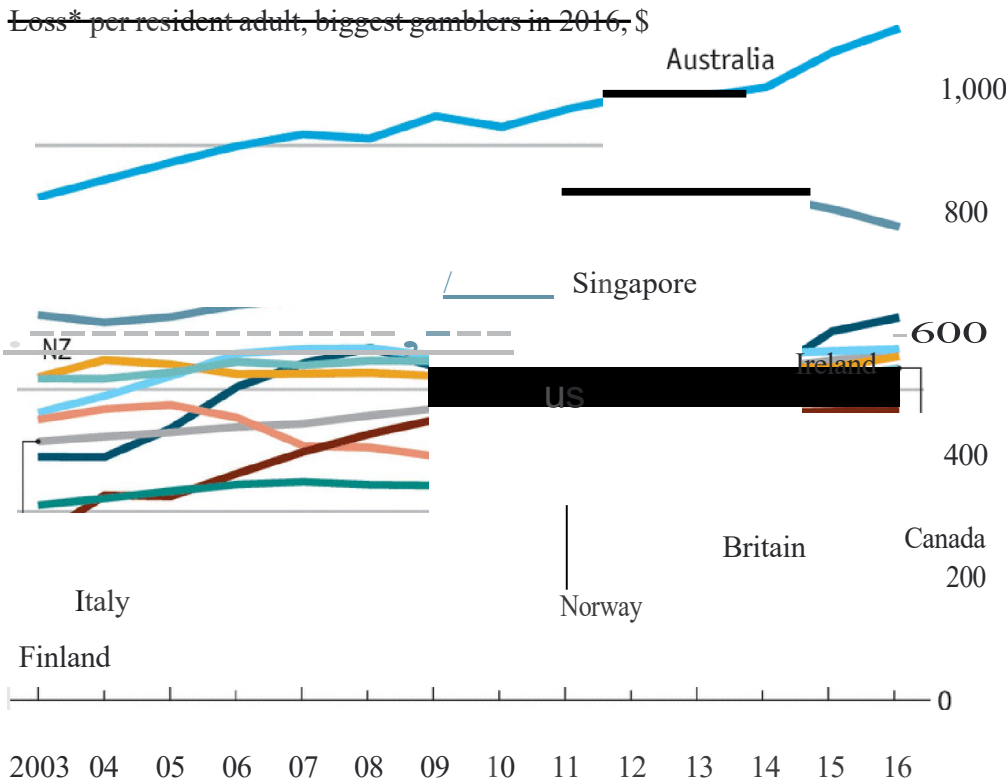
Biggest gamblers, loss* per resident adult, \$

Total losses by country, \$bn

Biggest loss* by country, \$bn



Loss* per resident adult, biggest gamblers in 2016, \$



Source: H2 Gambling Capital

*Stakes minus payouts, excl. expenses t includes Macau and Hong Kong

Key recommendations to reduce gambling harm in Australia

Recommendation one: Invest in an independent peak body to reduce gambling harm

The problem

At present, the gambling industry and its various supporters are financially able to allocate significant resources to public, private and political advocacy. The interests of those at risk of or experiencing gambling harm and gambling harm experts are not resourced by government and are limited in comparison with any other area of public health. In most other areas where products may have significant impact on public health and wellbeing, the government provides support - often through the Community Sector Support Fund - to enable voices of lived experience as well as experts to be heard by policy makers and introduce policies which both prevent and reduce harm.

The solution

Resource The Alliance as the national peak body focused on reducing gambling harm and highlighting lived experience and gambling harm from a public health perspective. This would provide significant advantages to the government and the community in enabling more effective policy development through structured consultation with stakeholders and experts beyond the well-resourced voices of the gambling industry.

Supporting The Alliance as the national peak body to reduce and prevent gambling harm would also inform and support the Federal Parliamentary Inquiry into online gambling and its harms recommendation 4 and 5 for increased, independent, government funding for research into gambling harm and the expansion of public education campaigns on gambling harm.

The investment

It is anticipated that a modest budget of such a body \$500k per year, a total of \$2 million across 4 years would support The Alliance to be sufficiently resourced as an effective peak body to represent the gambling harm reduction sector.

Recommendation two: Adopt key aspects of the Albanese Government's strategy and funding to reduce smoking and vaping and apply them to reducing gambling harm

The problem

Investment into preventing and reducing gambling harm at a federal level is grossly lacking, especially when compared to other major public health concerns like smoking, vaping and alcohol harm. The 2023-24 Federal Government is investing \$737 million to fund various measures to protect Australians against the harm caused by tobacco and vaping products³. In the Australian Government's 2023-24 budget papers, the total amount of funding going into 'minimising online gambling harms' isn't even able to be shared with the Australian public due to 'commercial sensitivities.' As a major Australian public health issue it is of significant concern that there is limited transparency regarding public funding into minimising the harm this industry is having on Australians.

The solution

The Alliance recommends that the federal budget includes funding similar to the size of the commitment to protect people from tobacco and vaping products. Similar to vaping and tobacco harm, gambling harm requires investment across a spectrum including prevention, awareness and education, treatment and support, research, legislation and enforcement. We urge the government to make a similar investment towards a public health information campaign around gambling and gambling related harms - mirroring that of the \$63 million that will be invested in the vaping and smoking campaign. Further, \$30 million invested into support programs and training among health practitioners would have a significant impact in tackling gambling harms.

The investment

Mirror the funding invested into the National Tobacco Strategy 2023-2030 of \$737 million.

³ <https://www.health.gov.au/ministers/the-hon-mark-butler-mp/media/taking-action-on-smoking-and-vaping>

Recommendation three: Fund and implement all 31 recommendations from the inquiry to tackle the escalating harms caused by gambling

The problem

Similar to the recommendation above there is an urgent need for investment into preventing and reducing gambling harm in Australia. The Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs inquiry into online gambling and its impact on those experiencing gambling harm included strong recommendations that provide the Federal Government with a roadmap for tackling gambling harm nationally.

The solution

All of the recommendations in the inquiry must be swiftly implemented. The Alliance urges the government to begin work now on a national strategy, national regulator and ombudsman, develop and fund a public education campaign and invest in a national clearinghouse for gambling research.

The investment

To be costed

Conclusion

It is crucial that the 2024-25 federal budget has a significant investment in preventing and reducing gambling harm in Australia. Tackling gambling harm is one of Australia's greatest public health issues and with very minimal funding from the Federal Government to combat the harms it causes to so many it will continue to grow. Australians deserve to be protected against gambling harm and as a nation we want to see losses and harm decrease - we no longer want the title of the world's biggest gambling losers.



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