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About the Alliance for Gambling Reform

AGR is the peak national advocacy body aiming to prevent and minimise harm from gambling. The Alliance is a small organisation that receives no government funding or support and relies on donations and grants to continue its work.

Gambling in Australia

Australia is blind to its addiction to gambling even though **Australians are the biggest losers in the world when it comes to gambling per capita** - 40% higher than any other country on poker machines and a conservative estimate of 20% ahead of any other country in the world in online gambling. Based on very conservative extrapolations from the UK, **at least 432,000 Australian children under 16 are already gambling.**

We don't like to admit it, but the impact of gambling is borne by many individuals, families, workplaces, communities, our justice systems, hospitals, schools, our safety, productivity and wellbeing. Harm from gambling includes relationship difficulties (links to family violence), health problems (depression, anxiety), emotional and psychological distress, individual/family financial problems, issues with work or study, cultural problems and criminal activity and unfortunately also gambling-related death by suicide.

Gambling should clearly be a public health issue, and, just as we try to protect the community from other products that causes significant harm to our health and wellbeing, we should have evidence-based measures to reduce gambling harm. We regulate motor vehicles to reduce the harm they can cause, we regulate alcohol, we regulate many potentially harmful drugs and food products, we regulate workplaces and entertainment.

The gambling industry has sold Australians the lie that there are a small minority of 'problem gamblers' and that gambling is part of our 'unique have-a-go larrikin culture', some fun with mates. These platitudes encourage us not to think about how gambling products are deliberately and expertly designed to maximise addiction and profitability.

The blaming of 'irresponsible' gamblers provides cover for a rapacious industry that becomes more profitable the more it targets losers. We ignore the way gambling companies exploit the vulnerable, allowing us to double down on our ongoing failure to regulate potentially very harmful gambling products in any way that meaningfully restricts the damage they can do.

Recent Royal Commissions, inquiries and reports such as the NSW CC highlight just how poor our existing regulation is – enabling widespread money laundering, crime and harm across our communities.

Gambling has now captured our sport, it dominates advertising, it has a permanent online presence, our phones are gambling machines – our culture is saturated in gambling advertising, promotions, inducements and the ready availability of gambling products.

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The Alliance is most concerned about the rapid growth in online gambling and our failure to safeguard our most vulnerable communities including children. The Alliance welcomed the national inquiry into online gambling (providing a submission and evidence) and look forward to working with the committee as the findings are handed down.

Our key recommendations include a ban on the broadcasting of gambling advertisements, a ban on credit for gambling, and a call for both a national regulator and a national gambling strategy.

It is not surprising that the gambling industry disregards or dismisses any serious attempts to reduce harmful gambling – partly because any such reduction would reduce their profitability. And with governments, media and sporting codes all working hand in glove with the powerful gambling lobby, Australia continues to pay a huge price just so we can keep the gambling industry rolling in money.

We need our leaders to act now to reduce the level of gambling harm and prevent a generation of young Australians being inculcated into the growing field of gambling products, all developed to ensure our children perpetuate Australia's title of the world's biggest gambling losers.

Carol Bennett
Chief Executive Officer
Alliance for Gambling Reform