

Annual Report 2025



**Protecting our kids
from gambling harm**

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Acknowledgement of Country

The Alliance for Gambling Reform acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities as the traditional custodians of the land we work on and pay our respects to elders past and present for their custodianship and resilient contribution to culture.



ALLIANCE FOR GAMBLING REFORM



Who we are and what we stand for

The Alliance for Gambling Reform is a national advocacy organisation working to reduce gambling harm in Australia. We partner with other organisations and with local councils to reduce the alarming level of gambling harm in Australia, we work to change the laws and rules governing the gambling industry.

We do not seek to ban gambling. Rather we seek to influence government to minimise the harmful behaviours of the gambling industry and to give voice to those who are impacted by gambling harm.

We are a registered health promotion charity and are funded by donations and grants from individuals, foundations, trusts, local government and other sources that do not have ties to the gambling industry. We are not affiliated with any political party.



Our vision, purpose, and objectives

Our Purpose

To provide national leadership promoting action to prevent and reduce the harm from gambling in Australia.

Our Vision

To enjoy a just, healthy, and prosperous Australia, where people can happily socialise together, and flourish without the harm created by gambling. By working together, we can achieve an Australia where there is no longer a need for our organisation.

Our Objectives

1. Build a groundswell to pressure governments to reform land-based and online gambling to reduce its harm.
2. Build a powerful coalition of partnering organisations to amplify our message and counterbalance the power of the gambling sector.
3. Secure sustainable funding for growth to continue the fight against gambling harm.

OUR FIGHT FOR GAMBLING REFORM



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Our fight for gambling reform

In this our 10th year, the Alliance has strengthened its advocacy, research, and policy work, helping to drive an unprecedented national conversation on gambling reform. We've been a regular presence in the media, raising awareness of the need for change, and amplifying the voices of people with lived experience. We continue to campaign for the Federal Government to implement all 31 recommendations from the Murphy Inquiry Report as well as advocating for state and territory governments to work to reduce poker machine losses and better regulate casinos to protect Australians.



Alliance CEO, Martin Thomas speaking at a press conference in Canberra, with Andrew Wilkie MP, Kate Chaney MP and Rebekha Sharkie MP.

Support Us

The Alliance for Gambling Reform relies heavily on private donations. If you would like to support our work, you can use the link below to donate. You can give a once-off donation, or you can sign up to donate regularly each month. Monthly donations from our supporters give us the ability to plan and resource our work to reduce gambling harm in Australia.



Donate Today



10 Years of Advocacy



2025 marks the 10th Anniversary of the Alliance for Gambling Reform. Over the past decade, the Alliance has grown from a small coalition of passionate advocates and Victorian councils into a national voice for change – working tirelessly to prevent and reduce gambling harm, amplify lived experience, and hold the gambling industry to account.

Together with our partners, Leadership Councils, supporters, and communities, the Alliance has achieved some remarkable milestones.

Here are just a few of the highlights from our first 10 years.

1. Growing Public Awareness of Gambling Harm

- Through cohesive and consistent advocacy, the Alliance has driven national recognition of gambling harm. Surveys show that 76% of Australians now support banning gambling advertising.

2. Groundbreaking Campaigns

- The “Pokies Play You” campaign in 2016 reframed gambling as a public health issue drawing on research and working closely with councils on public events to highlight our message.
- Our petition to ban gambling ads has been signed by nearly 40,000 Australian’s.

3. Policy & Legislative Reform

- Have worked with crossbenchers, oppositions and government MPs and ministers to push for legislative and regulatory changes in all states, territories and nationally that support the prevention of gambling harm.
- The Federal Inquiry into Online Gambling which featured the submissions and testimony of the Alliance and many of our *Voices* continues to shine a light on the harm of online gambling and the need for immediate action by the Federal Government

4. Media & Public Advocacy Leadership

- Called for a nationwide ban on gambling advertising, backed by an open letter signed by former PMs, premiers, sports leaders, and social justice figures.
- Persistently highlighted the staggering scale of gambling losses, such as the \$32 billion lost by Australians in 2022–23, framing gambling as a national health crisis.

5. Empowering Lived Experience Voices

- **Raising Community Awareness:** *Voices* participants share their stories of lived experience in the media, at community events, and through Alliance campaigns, helping to build greater public understanding of the real impacts of gambling harm.
- **Influencing Decision Makers:** Participants present directly to government inquiries, local councils, and parliamentarians, ensuring that lived experience is front and centre in shaping laws and regulations.
- **Driving Advocacy and Reform:** Many *Voices* participants go on to become active advocates, leading public conversations, contributing to Alliance campaigns, and highlighting how harmful products like sports betting affect individuals, families, and children.
- **Shaping Policy and Practice:** *Voices* participants provide input into Alliance policy submissions and strategic decisions, ensuring reforms are grounded in the reality of those most affected.
- **Empowerment and Leadership:** Through training, peer support, and opportunities to engage with decision-makers, the program empowers *Voices* participants to transform their experiences into meaningful advocacy for change.

6. Community & Local Leadership

- Partnered with local councils across Australia through our Leadership Council program, equipping them with information and support to prevent gambling harm.
- Delivered community engagement tools such as the Ka-Ching! screening kit, engaging thousands in grassroots action.

7. Influencing Casino Reforms & Oversight

- Engaged in casino inquiries across the country, including supporting those with lived experience to share their stories, which resulted in changed legislation and regulation, increased oversight and enforcement.

8. A Legacy of Advocacy You Can Trace Back

- From its founding impetus in Victoria – set up by concerned individuals, councils and organisations over poker machine harm – the Alliance now spans federal, state, and territory advocacy, partnering with councils, media, advocates, and researchers to elevate the call for reform across Australia.



Image from a campaign



OUR FUNDERS AND SUPPORTERS

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Trusts and Foundations

We are grateful to the philanthropic organisations and major donors that support our organisation, both previous and current, including the Ross Trust, Our Community, Reichstein Foundation, and John T Reid Charitable Trusts. We thank them and look forward to our continuing partnership.



Leadership Councils

Our network of local government Leadership Councils is vital to our work. We thank them for their participation, leadership, and support in reducing harm from gambling in their local communities.





**CHAIR'S
REPORT**

Chair's Report

The Alliance is a national leader, advocating for change to gambling related harm. We share our research-based policies to advise governments and policy makers how to tackle and reduce gambling harm. We regularly consult with politicians and advisors at all levels of government. I would like to acknowledge the many politicians across Australia that are maintaining pressure on government by representing their constituents who want to see change.

While we acknowledge this Federal Labor Government has made some reforms to reduce gambling harm. There remains a fundamental disconnect between the concerns expressed by the community, and the investment in prevention and harm reduction by all levels of government. The absence of meaningful action by government to tackle gambling harm is perpetuating harm caused by adult products that are both addictive and harmful – just like tobacco.

This year, there have been further industry examples of some staggering ethical and governance failures on the part of management and their Boards. The sector is clearly under-regulated and not held accountable for its actions.

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While we acknowledge this Federal Labor Government has made some reforms to reduce gambling harm. There remains a fundamental disconnect between the concerns expressed by the community, and the investment in prevention and harm reduction by all levels of government.

Recently we have seen regulators stepping in to act. In 2023, the Federal Court of Australia ordered Crown to pay the \$450 million penalty for its breaches of the Act.

In June 2024, the Federal Court ordered SkyCity to pay \$67 million penalty for its serious and systemic non-compliance breaches with Australia's Anti-Money Laundering and Counter-Terrorism Financing (AML/CTF) laws.

More recently, in December 2024, AUSTRAC applied for civil penalty orders against Entain Group Pty Ltd which trades as Ladbrokes, Neds and other online betting brands, for alleged serious and systemic non-compliance with Australia's AML/CTF laws.

In February 2025, ASIC began civil penalty proceedings against 10 former directors and executives of Star Entertainment, alleging they have breached of their duties under the Corporations Act.

And in July 2025, AUSTRAC applied for civil penalty orders against Mount Pritchard and District Community Club Ltd similarly for alleged serious and systemic non-compliance with Australia's AML/CTF laws.

We can see that with actions being taken by regulators against all the big casinos, the opportunity for money laundering has moved into the clubs and pubs.

The Alliance has continued our review of the superannuation industry data and scrutiny of investments of funds. A recent paper by Responsible Investment Association Australasia (RIAA), "From Values to Riches" 2024 shows that greenwashing concerns for investors are on the rise, with 78% of Australians expressing wariness, up from 72% in 2022.

There is increased demand from investors that their investments are to be responsible and ethical. 65% would invest more if their money actively contributed to a better world.

This research tells us that Australians are keener than ever to align their investments with their values, but the discrepancy between Australians' desire to invest ethically and the reality of where their money is invested is deeply concerning.

Regulatory reforms such as the mandatory environmental, social, and governance factors (ESG) reporting will assist investors with transparency and accountability for the gambling companies to take more meaningful action to reduce harm caused by their products. It's pleasing to see that Australian Super has planned to remove gambling from its Ethical investment product.



Alliance Ban Gambling Ads Campaign

This is my last report as Chair, as my final term is coming to an end. I have been privileged to work with a range of amazing colleagues, and I would like to particularly thank Lizzie O'Shea, for her knowledge, perspective and persistence.

At the end of 2025 I will hand over to our new Chair, Angela Tillmanns. Angela has an extensive senior executive and board career across the public, private and community sectors throughout Australia, and has led major societal reforms across many sectors and is passionate about challenging the status quo.

The Alliance will continue to put the spotlight on government to be a key part of the solution to reducing gambling harm. After two years, we continue to wait for the response to the Murphy Report.

Gambling is a public health issue and we want gambling to be regulated in the same way tobacco is regulated, including a total ban on its advertising. Everyone is waiting for the change. The community is sick of gambling ads and the gambling industry targeting our young people.

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Sharon Dickson
Board Chair

Our Board



Sharon Dickson
Chair



Stuart James
Deputy Chair



Amanda Power
Secretary and Treasurer



Kathy Richardson
Board Member



Pita Williams
Board Member



Tim Lo Surdo
Board Member



Catherine Murphy
Board Member



Jon O'Keeffe
Board Member
Joined 12 Sep 2024



Elizabeth
O'Shea
Resigned
22 Nov 2024



Karen
Carey
Resigned
6 Nov 2024



CEO'S REPORT

Alliance CEO, Martin Thomas addressing the media with Andrew Wilkie MP, Kate Chaney MP, and Rebekha Sharkie MP.

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CEO's Report

To quote Charles Dickens' classic introduction to *A Tale of Two Cities*: "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times".

It sums up the contradictions of a year in which the vast majority of the public embraced the need for gambling reform and a ban on gambling advertising, while losses skyrocketed and our political leaders remained deaf to reform.

This year marked the second anniversary of the Murphy Report parliamentary inquiry into online gambling. Its 31 recommendations are a blueprint for reducing gambling harm in Australia including ending gambling advertising.

This year more than 75% of Australians expressed their support for a full gambling advertising ban.

During this year the Alliance was overwhelmed with support by individuals and organisations who want gambling harm reduced.

Some 75 leading Australians and key organisations including John Howard, Malcolm and Lucy Turnbull, Rosie Batty, and Craig Foster signed an open letter to the PM for action in a national newspaper blitz organised by the Alliance.

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This year more than 75% of Australians expressed their support for a full gambling advertising ban.

The evidence that gambling harms families was also underlined by research we commissioned that showed gambling losses were a bigger drain on average household budgets than power bills.

There are many now in Australia that are calling for gambling to be at long last treated as a public health issue and for it to be regulated in the same way tobacco is regulated, including a total ban on its advertising.

As my colleague, Tim Costello notes in his piece (See: The Message from our Chief Advocate), there is growing and visceral anger at the way young people are being targeted by gambling companies. They are being groomed to gamble through the proliferation of advertising around our major sporting codes especially our footy codes.

There is also evidenced through some joint research undertaken by the Alliance that the gambling industry is secretly targeting kids as young as 14 years of age to download gambling apps.

And yet while there has been so much progress, gambling losses continue to spiral to new record highs. This year, total national gambling losses reached a staggering \$32 billion.

Government inaction is also stubborn.

The Federal Government despite its election win has still not formally responded at all to the Murphy Report. The status quo means Australians are still being exposed to a million gambling ads on our screens every year.

Similarly in a year in which poker machine losses across state and territories continue to reach record highs, real reform to reduce poker machine harm foundered.

Despite the evidence of the need for a mandatory pre-commitment cashless card, NSW, Tasmania, and now Victoria have all delayed, blocked or watered down such schemes in the face of public outrage.

There was one significant breakthrough when the NSW Government moved to join Victoria and to ban gambling advertising on its entire public transport network.

And of course, we have had tremendous support from our Leadership Councils as they seek to reduce gambling harm in our community.

I believe such is the public outrage of the damage gambling is doing in our community and the continued political inaction – the groundswell for change is now beyond stopping. There is no putting the genie back in the bottle.

And this is why this last year has seen the Alliance receive unprecedented levels of support in our advocacy campaigns, in our fundraising, and in our media presence.

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I want to thank our Board, our staff and our Voices of lived experience who courageously and powerfully tell their stories.

I want to thank our Board, our staff and our Voices of lived experience who courageously and powerfully tell their stories.

I want to thank our financial supporters as well as those who support our advocacy.

We cannot achieve what we have without you, and with the fight ahead, we will rely more than ever on your continued commitment and support.



Martin Thomas
Chief Executive Officer



CHIEF ADVOCATE'S REPORT

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Chief Advocate's Report

During this year the Victorian Coroner's heard details of the tragic suicide of a 22-year-old young man, Kyle Hudson.

Kyle took his life shortly after losing two bets worth more than \$6000.

The hearing is set to probe the actions of SportsBet and the banks from which Kyle drew out large sums of money for betting.

The tragic case provides a troubling snapshot behind the figures that show sports betting is exploding among young men – growing at up to 40% annually.

During this year research conducted by The Australia Institute for the Alliance revealed that a staggering 600,000 under aged teenagers (12-17 years of age) are gambling \$18m annually.

Sports and Communications Minister, Anika Wells, when adding You Tube to the social media ban for under 16-year-olds, said she was intent on protecting people not platforms.

She is the Minister now in charge of responding to the Murphy parliamentary inquiry recommendations to ban gambling ads and gambling incentives. But two years on from Murphy's recommendations we still have no government response to Murphy's 31 recommendations or any reform to protect children being groomed by gambling ads.

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For boys not to be gambling and talking about their wins at school was so uncool - such is the capture of gambling and sport.

During the year, I spoke to a group of leaders aged 18-20 at a University in Melbourne. Gambling came up in my speech.

After the event, a young man dressed in a suit told me that he had been at an ex-school friend's funeral that day. His friend took his life after losing all his savings in sports betting.

They had started gambling at school and he said all his friends, all underage, were gambling.

For boys not to be gambling and talking about their wins at school was so uncool - such is the capture of gambling and sport. And so, friendship for young men and being cool now revolved around gambling.

You get a betting account by using an older sibling's ID – such as a driver's license or passport and then you are away. Then you deposit money in the account.

Curiously you're immediately trapped as you cannot withdraw the money without physically presenting to withdraw it, which you never risk.

If you do not bet for a day, then a \$50 free bonus lands in your account, so you try a number of apps and get the bonuses, and soon you have lost all track of your real losses.

Gambling companies effectively now own the sports games people gamble on – and anyone who has watched AFL or NRL would say this is the case.

I have been campaigning for reform to reduce gambling harm for more than 30 years. I have personally presided over the funeral of many people who have lost their lives to gambling.

Yet the threat that gambling poses today – especially to our kids – is the greatest it has been over three decades.

This year, the Alliance marked its 10th anniversary, I was there at the beginning. With the help of our supporters, we have put gambling reform on the national agenda.

We have enabled many people who have been harmed from gambling to speak out publicly and call for change. I want to thank them for their courage.

The Alliance's role in Australia is now more important than ever. We must maintain the pressure for change.

“

I have been campaigning for reform to reduce gambling harm for more than 30 years. I have personally presided over the funeral of many people who have lost their lives to gambling.

We will continue to pressure the sporting codes – including the AFL and the NRL – to do much more to reduce the promotion of advertising that now envelops the game.

But given the fat profit these codes make on the backs of their supporters, such action is unlikely.

So, it turns to the Federal Government to act to protect our kids and also the scores of young men and women who are being targeted by a predatory industry.

Gambling is not just a gaming issue, it is a public health crisis that is leading to extraordinary suffering and social harm. We are so thankful to those who support us and ask you to continue this support into the future.



Rev. Tim Costello AO
Chief Advocate



ADVOCACY AND POLICY

*Alliance Chief Advocate Tim Costello with
Voices Advocate Cecelia and her daughter*



Advocacy and Policy

Over the past 12 months, the Alliance has led a national campaign calling on the Federal Government to adopt all 31 recommendations of the Murphy Report – the landmark parliamentary inquiry into online gambling and its impacts on those experiencing harm.

A major highlight was our full-page advertisement in the national press, calling on leaders to fully implement the recommendations. This action became a lightning rod for support, attracting over 75 signatures from prominent Australians and key organisations and academics – including John Howard, Malcolm and Lucy Turnbull, Rosie Batty, and Craig Foster.

Throughout the year, we have amplified the voices of people with lived experience and focused on engaging directly with parliamentarians and the media, which has helped us build broad community momentum. By pushing for the full adoption of the Murphy Report's recommendations, the Alliance continues to drive meaningful reform to better protect individuals, families, and communities from gambling harm.

Shocking new figures this year revealed that national gambling losses for 2022-23 totalled \$31 billion, a massive jump from the previous high of \$25 billion in 2018-19.

This updated data brought the average loss per Australian adult to \$1,555 per year – up from \$1,307 (2018-19).

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By pushing for the full adoption of the Murphy Report's recommendations, the Alliance continues to drive meaningful reform to better protect individuals, families, and communities from gambling harm.



These figures also reflected record losses across most of our states and territories – it should be a wakeup call and certainly increases pressure on our politicians to act.

The AFL & NRL Grand Finals highlighted the issue of gambling ads in sport once again, and with the support of a major donor, we ran advertisements in national newspapers which helped us raise awareness of the issue of gambling in AFL & NRL Finals. We also launched a 'swarm' campaign targeting key ALP seats in Sydney coinciding with the football finals, in an effort to increase pressure for a full gambling ad ban.

In November 2024, we joined forces with activist share trading platform SIX to use investor power to stop gambling ads at Australia's big media companies. The Alliance's Chief Advocate – Tim Costello, *Voices* advocate – Mark Kempster, and other shareholders and advocates questioned Nine Entertainment's Board on its reliance on gambling advertisements and its lobbying against gambling reform legislation.

We also issued an Open Letter to the Tasmanian Premier, Jeremy Rockliff in November 2024 urging them to resist the efforts of the gambling lobby to undermine the promised poker machine mandatory pre-commitment card reforms. These reforms remain on the backburner.



Left to right: Mary Bennett, Anglicare Tas; Peter Hoult, Tim Costello AO, Alliance for Gambling Reform; Sarah Charlton, Holyoake; and Lucinda Szczypior, TasCOSS

2025 kicked off with a significant win as the NSW Government announced it was banning gambling advertising on its public transport network.

The ban applies to internal and external advertising on trains, metro, buses, light rail, train stations, and ferry terminals, and extends to all casino, lottery, and online betting advertising.

The NSW transport ban is significant in both scale and intent. When fully implemented, it will clear gambling advertisements from nearly 800 station billboards, over 3,500 buses, and dozens of digital displays across our most populous state. More than a policy shift, it acknowledges that our public spaces should serve the public good.

Over the past year, we have released a series of significant research reports that shed light on the scale and impact of gambling harm in Australia, providing powerful support for our reform agenda. This year, our research publications included groundbreaking research by Equity Economics into the impact of gambling on Australian household budgets. The findings revealed the deep financial strain gambling places on families, highlighting the urgent need for gambling reform.

This research was the cornerstone of our federal election campaign, driving home the message that stronger protections are needed to safeguard household finances and support Australian families. The research found:



Australian households spent \$3,045 on gambling in 2022-23 more than they spent on essential utilities like electricity, gas, and other fuels (\$2,821)

25%

There has been a 25% spike in gambling losses on pre-pandemic losses



Gambling losses have risen 6.8% while real wages have declined 5.7%



Australia's annual gambling losses (\$31.5bn) now eclipse what governments spend on aged care (\$28.3bn) and rivals that spent on the National Disability Insurance Scheme (\$35.2bn)

A link to the media release and full report are available [here](#).

We also commissioned a national survey through The Australia Institute to gauge public support for banning gambling ads, and the results were overwhelming.

Four in five Australians agree that children are exposed to too many gambling ads (80%), and 76% support a full ban on gambling ads. The survey also found that four in five (81%) Australians support banning gambling ads on social media and online, and more than three quarters (79%) support banning gambling ads in sporting stadiums and on players' uniforms. A link to the media release and the full report are available [here](#).

As part of our federal election campaign, we held a blitz campaign across key marginal seats to raise awareness of gambling harm and to ask voters to ask their candidate if they support gambling reform and a ban on gambling ads. We ramped up our media coverage to reach more Australians than ever before and released new research by The Australia Institute showing 600,000 teenagers under 18 years of age are gambling! A link to the media release and full report are available [here](#).

“

Four in five Australians agree that children are exposed to too many gambling ads (80%), and 76% support a full ban on gambling ads.

In the lead up to the federal election, the Alliance partnered with the Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE) to renew our call for an end to all political donations from alcohol and gambling companies.

This is an important issue as figures released in February 2025 from the Australian Electoral Commission's Transparency Register revealed that alcohol and gambling companies and lobby groups donated \$2.47 million to political parties in the 2023-24 financial year. The Alliance finds it appalling that lobby groups continue to influence important government reform, despite widespread community support to better regulate the gambling industry.

We need better laws around political donations so that powerful interests such as the gambling lobby can't continue to wield so much political power and hold the nation to ransom.



Rebecca Paterson

Director - Policy, Leadership Councils and Government Engagement

VOICES FOR GAMBLING REFORM



8

Voices for Gambling Reform

A key part of the Alliance's work is partnering with people who have experienced gambling harm, through our *Voices for Gambling Reform* program. Their lived experience is at the heart of everything we do and has been pivotal in driving major legislative and policy changes.

Strategic Growth and Membership Expansion

Over the past year, the program has transformed significantly, growing from strength to strength while maintaining our strategic focus on personally engaging with people rather than focusing on just numbers. We now have 32 active members, representing a diverse coalition of advocates including people with lived experience, family members, health professionals, expert researchers, and specialists in policy, advocacy, education, public speaking, and counselling.

Rather than focusing on recruiting large numbers, we prioritised building a small, highly skilled team – a shift that has proved far more effective in creating meaningful impact.

This approach has allowed us to provide more targeted support and training to our advocates while ensuring their voices carry greater weight in reform discussions.



Addressing the Digital Gambling Crisis

We have seen growing interest from people impacted by online sports betting, particularly young men, which led us to significantly expand our presence in the digital space. This demographic shift represents a critical evolution in gambling harm, and our *Voices* have been instrumental in highlighting the sophisticated targeting strategies used by gambling companies in digital environments.

Major Policy Contributions

BetStop Review

Our *Voices* provided exceptional feedback to the statutory review of BetStop, offering insights that proved invaluable during consultations. Their real-world experiences highlighted critical gaps including registration loopholes, continued marketing from offshore operators, and challenges with the sponsor system. These contributions directly shaped our joint submission with Wesley Mission, which included nine key recommendations to strengthen the National Self-Exclusion Register.

Parliamentary Engagement

Our *Voices* have actively participated in parliamentary processes, providing evidence at inquiries and engaging directly with federal and state politicians. Multiple members wrote letters to their MPs throughout the year, with several securing face-to-face meetings to discuss gambling reform priorities, including the implementation of the Murphy Report recommendations.

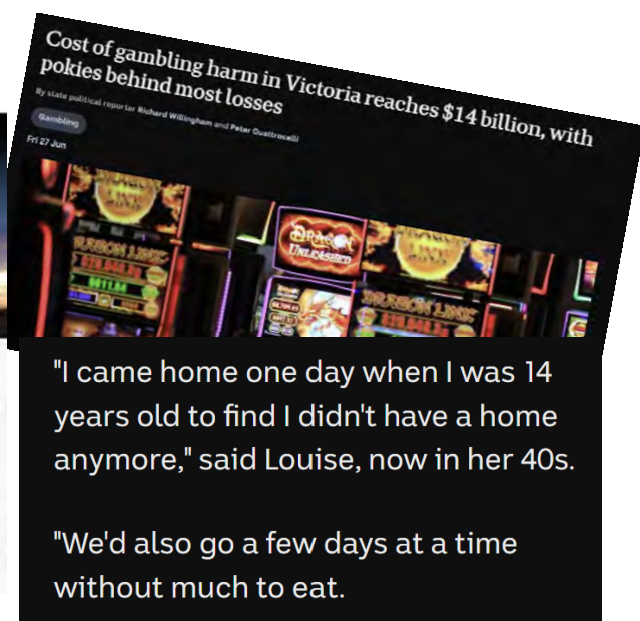
Media and Public Advocacy

Traditional and Digital Media Impact

Our media presence has grown substantially, with powerful appearances by program members helping maintain pressure on key reform issues. Notable achievements include:

1. First-time media participants: Several *Voices* made their media debuts, sharing their stories through major outlets including ABC News and news.com.au
2. Collaborative storytelling: Multiple members participated in podcasts, documentaries, and investigative journalism projects
3. Social media expansion: New video and audio content, including YouTube shorts, has amplified our reach and engagement

You can read the latest news [here](#).



High-Profile Events

- **Teals Event Melbourne:**
Featured a Voice alongside Tim Costello and MPs Zoe Daniel, Monique Ryan, and Kate Chaney, drawing 250+ attendees
- **Australian Local Government Association Conference:**
Successfully engaged with local councils nationwide using our new web page, showing gambling harm data from their communities – many councils were shocked by the financial losses, with several councils now considering partnerships with the Alliance.



Alliance Voices of Lived Experience Advocate – Mark Kempster with City of Casey Mayor – Stefan Koomen, and Alliance CEO – Martin Thomas.

Innovation and Digital Tools

New Resources and Platforms

1. **Website redesign:** Launched a dedicated *Voices* page at agr.org.au/voices featuring member stories and media contributions
2. **Ad Watch initiative:**
Developed a collaborative spreadsheet allowing *Voices* to document and report problematic gambling advertising
3. **MP engagement template:**
Created standardised resources to help members effectively communicate with their political representatives
4. **Media training program:**
Developed comprehensive step-by-step guides for sharing stories across radio, TV, podcasts, and press platforms

Video and Content Creation

We welcomed a new video and audio editor, Zena Kells, to our team, enabling professional-quality content creation in partnership with our *Voices*. This has resulted in educational videos, social media content, and educational resources that bring the science of gambling harm to broader audiences.

Watch the latest [here](#).

Grassroots and Community Engagement

Our *Voices* have expanded their advocacy beyond traditional channels:

- **Community outreach:** Organised information stands and flyer distributions to connect with vulnerable groups
- **Educational initiatives:** One Voice implemented gambling harm education requirements in grassroots sports (touch football coaching)
- **Professional networks:** Leveraged members' expertise in accounting, counselling, and academic research to strengthen our evidence base
- **Collaborative partnerships:** Built connections with organisations like Beyond Blue, Headspace, and local health services



Emerging Issues and Advocacy Focus

Our *Voices* have identified and are actively addressing several critical concerns:

- **Protecting our kids:** Raising awareness of the increasing targeting of young people by gambling ads and companies.
- **Sports integrity:** Exposing the "revolving door" between sports administration, government, and gambling industry leadership
- **Indigenous and CALD communities:** Supporting research and advocacy for communities disproportionately targeted by gambling companies
- **Gambling industry rebranding:** Highlighting parallels between gambling's evolution and tobacco industry tactics (similar to smoking's rebranding to vaping)
- **Influencer marketing:** Documenting the rise of gambling promotion through social media influencers targeting young people.

Long-term Vision and Future Development

Our strategic goal remains building a strong, diverse community of advocates who can learn together, share knowledge, and develop advanced advocacy skills. By combining trained advocates and health practitioners with a central hub of resources, we're helping people impacted by gambling harm find support more easily while amplifying their voices in the reform movement.

The program's evolution this year demonstrates that focused, strategic advocacy by a skilled team of diverse voices creates far greater impact than larger, less coordinated efforts. Our *Voices'* courage in sharing their stories, combined with their growing expertise in media, policy, and public advocacy, continues to drive the national conversation toward meaningful gambling reform.

Looking ahead, we're developing specialised programs for youth engagement (18-25 years) and Indigenous community support, ensuring our advocacy reflects the full spectrum of gambling harm's impact across Australian society.



Empower advocates to drive change and combat gambling harm



Building a Community of Advocacy



Establishing Resources



Building Guidelines and Support

Voices Stories

Mark Kempster: The Face of Australia's Gambling Reform Movement

Mark Kempster's journey from losing over \$100,000 to gambling addiction to becoming one of Australia's most prominent voices for reform has captured national attention. As a leader, he channels his experience into advocacy.

Since joining the Alliance for Gambling Reform as a leading *Voices* and Media Advocate, Mark has become an unstoppable force in the media landscape. The Alliance has lost count of the numerous interviews he's conducted across television, radio, and print media, establishing himself as a leading spokesperson for gambling reform. His authentic storytelling and deep understanding of the industry's predatory tactics have made him a sought-after voice on this critical issue.

Beyond his media presence, Mark has begun to develop a comprehensive media training program for other members of the *Voices of Lived Experience* program, empowering fellow survivors to share their stories effectively. His leadership extends to countless meetings with Members of Parliament, where he advocates for implementing all 31 recommendations from the Murphy Report.

Mark has spoken at numerous events and conferences, using each platform to push for meaningful reform and advertising bans.

His appearances on television, radio, and in print media represent countless occasions where he's transformed personal trauma into a catalyst for change, making him the undisputed media leader of Australia's gambling reform movement.

You can [read Marks Story in full at News.com.au with Alex Blair](#)

“

"The vulnerability you show is going to help someone, and that's what I always go into interviews and event with. As long as I can reach and connect with one person in the room, I've done my job that day. If telling my story helps just one person, that's all you really need to take from it."



Louise McCourt: From Classroom to Community - Amplifying Gambling Reform

Louise McCourt is one of Australia's most compelling advocates for gambling harm prevention. Her personal experience of gambling harm from a family member sparked three decades of addiction counselling work and her emergence as a prominent Voice for Gambling Reform.

Louise's innovative work spans diverse environments - from delivering counselling qualifications to Cronulla Sharks NRL players to teaching TAFE courses in gambling addiction and rehabilitation. Her blend of compassion, empathy and understanding of life challenges connects her with elite athletes and community volunteers alike.

As someone who has counselled people imprisoned for gambling-related offences, Louise has revealed a crucial insight: addiction, not character, drives harmful behaviour. "None of the people I worked with in jail belonged there," Louise reflects. "They were ordinary people that the system had failed."

Today, Louise's advocacy extends beyond individual sessions. Through her headspace advisory role, podcast interviews, and an upcoming documentary, she champions systemic change. At a grassroots level, she pushes for mandatory gambling harm education in community sports, including touch football coaching.

Louise exemplifies how lived experience combined with professional expertise creates ripples of change extending from individual recovery to systemic reform - transforming personal pain into powerful public purpose.

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"We need to stop gambling harm before it starts, not just pick up the pieces after lives are shattered. Individual counselling saves one person at a time, but systemic reform can prevent thousands from needing that counselling in the first place."



From Crisis to Campaign: John's Fight for Gambling Reform

John lost \$548,000 across three gambling operators despite seeking help through self-exclusion. When he permanently excluded himself from one operator in 2017, the fragmented regulatory system allowed him to immediately open accounts with others across different state jurisdictions. This wasn't an oversight – governments knew these gaps existed but took six years to implement the BetStop national register.

Today, John has transformed his painful experience into powerful advocacy through the Alliance for Gambling Reform's *Voices* program. He recently co-headlined a major Melbourne forum, *"Ban Gambling Ads: Two Years Since Murphy Report,"* speaking alongside Alliance Chief Advocate Tim Costello and federal MPs Zoe Daniel, Monique Ryan, and Kate Chaney. The event spotlighted a damning statistic: while the government ignored Murphy's gambling ad ban recommendation, Australians lost another \$60 billion.

John's advocacy work spans multiple strategic channels. He writes detailed submissions to government inquiries and regulatory bodies, crafts targeted letters to local MPs demanding urgent reform, and contributes compelling stories to the Alliance website that humanise policy debates.

His social media engagement amplifies campaign messages, while his participation in coordinated email appeals pressures decision-makers. John also contributes to research efforts documenting gambling harm patterns and regulatory failures.

John's journey from gambling harm survivor to reform advocate proves that lived experience drives meaningful change, building an undeniable case for implementing the Murphy report's recommendations – especially the gambling advertising ban that governments continue to ignore

You can [read John's story on the Alliance website.](#)

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“Personal responsibility requires functional systems. When those systems fail by design, we have every right to demand accountability from those with the power to fix them. The cost of regulatory negligence isn't just measured in individual tragedies - it's measured in the erosion of public trust in institutions that claim to protect us.”



“I hadn’t laughed like that since I was a teenager” – Max’s path to healing after 25 years lost to pokies

Through our *Voices for Gambling Reform* program, Max courageously shared his deeply personal journey with gambling harm—a story that illuminates the devastating impact of poker machines on vulnerable Australians.

For 25 years, Max's life revolved around a fortnightly ritual: waiting by the ATM inside the Casino every second Wednesday at 1am for his pension payment to arrive. What followed was predictable and heartbreaking—his entire income would disappear within hours, leaving him to struggle for money until dawn.

Max's story reveals a crucial insight about gambling addiction: it often isn't about chasing money at all. For him, it was about feeling "excited and alive" in a world that otherwise felt "dull and boring." The machines became his escape from depression, a form of self-medication that trapped him for decades.

Today, over a decade into recovery through community support and therapy, Max dedicates himself to helping others break free from similar cycles. His participation in our program demonstrates extraordinary courage—sharing such intimate struggles publicly to help others find their way out.

We extend our deepest gratitude to Max for his bravery in telling his story. His voice helps illuminate the human cost behind Australia's \$31.5 billion annual gambling losses and inspires hope for those still struggling.

You can [read Max's story at News.com.au here.](https://www.news.com.au/news/health/voices-for-gambling-reform/max-story/news-story)

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“I laughed until I was crying. I hadn’t laughed like that since I was a teenager, 30 years before.



From Victim to Voice: Why Chrissie Won't Let Gambling Harm Stay "Normalised"

Chrissie was only seven when she first noticed things disappearing from their home. Jewellery, appliances, furniture—her mother was selling everything to feed a gambling addiction that would steal Chrissie's childhood.

"I came home one day when I was 14 years old to find I didn't have a home anymore," Chrissie recalls. The family faced days without adequate food, devastating poverty, and constant instability as her mother's pokies addiction consumed their lives.

The impact went far beyond financial hardship. "It created devastating amounts of poverty and mental health issues for us," Chrissie explains. "We certainly experienced material deprivation, but it also caused serious family breakdowns."

Forced to grow up quickly, Chrissie navigated the impossible challenge of loving, but being unable to trust someone whose addiction was destroying their family. Now in her 40s, she advocates for gambling reform, calling addiction "horribly normalised" in our society.

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"It created devastating amounts of poverty and mental health issues for us. We certainly experienced material deprivation, but it also caused serious family breakdowns."

Chrissie is equipping herself with the skills to drive meaningful change. With her educational background and commitment to social justice, she's determined to challenge societal perceptions and advocate for reform.

Chrissie's story represents thousands of Victorian families affected by gambling harm—harm that costs our state \$14 billion annually. Her experience shows why mandatory pre-commitment systems are urgent protections for vulnerable families.

You can [read Chrissie's story on ABC news here](#).



**VOICES
FOR
GAMBLING
REFORM**

"I came home one day when I was 14 years old to find I didn't have a home anymore."



COUNCILS AND SUPPORTERS

Hume Council Gambling Harm Symposium 2023

Local councils

In March 2025, the Alliance held webinars for local councils which covered the often-overlooked intersection of gambling and local sport. These webinars provided an opportunity for the Alliance to discuss the benefits of including gambling as a public health issue in council Municipal Health & Wellbeing Plans to create grassroots changes in attitudes and reduce Australia's \$32 billion gambling problem.

Feedback on our council webinars showed that councillors appreciated the opportunity to hear from our Chief Advocate – Tim Costello, and AGR's Voices of Lived Experience Advocate – Mark Kempster, who spoke about his experience of gambling harm and how local sporting clubs were a key influence in his experience of significant gambling harm.

This year saw the Alliance hold its first exhibition booth at the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) National General Assembly (NGA). The NGA is the largest annual gathering of local government leaders in Australia, bringing together mayors, councillors, and senior council staff from across the country to share ideas, experiences, and solutions to common challenges facing communities; hear from federal ministers, shadow ministers, and policy experts; and to build relationships.

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Councillors appreciated the opportunity to hear from our Chief Advocate – Tim Costello, and AGR's Voices of Lived Experience Advocate – Mark Kempster.

Alliance Attends National General Assembly of Local Government

This week's National General Assembly of Local Government in Canberra is themed National Priorities Need Local Solutions.

The Alliance is on the ground, showing attendees just how much gambling harm is costing their communities.



It's essentially the biggest policy and networking event for local councils in Australia, and this year, Alliance staff members Hayley Wallace, Cheryl Gration, Nick Nguyen and *Voices of Lived Experience* Advocate Mark Kempster were in attendance to talk to councillors from all across Australia about their gambling harm concerns both locally and nationally, and provide insight into the cost of gambling in their community.

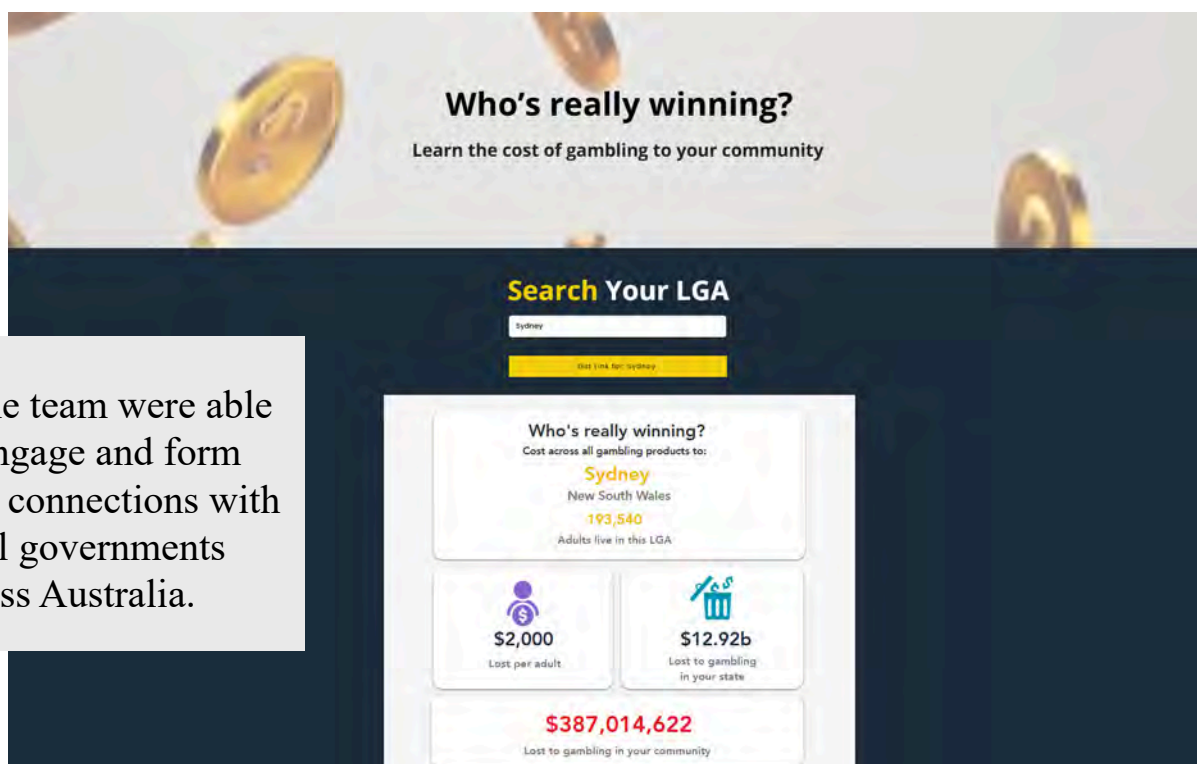
Having an exhibition booth at the conference was a fantastic opportunity for the Alliance to connect with councils from every corner of the country. It was especially valuable to meet face-to-face with our Leadership Councils, strengthening the relationships that are so important to our shared work.

Using a specially designed web page, ["Who's Really Winning?"](#), and the latest nation-wide gambling and census data, the team were able to engage and form new connections with local governments across Australia, many of whom were eager to learn more about gambling harm in their communities and the steps they can take to reduce it.

These conversations are vital – local councils play a key role in driving change, raising awareness, and influencing policy at both the state and federal levels. Being part of the ALGA conference helped us to share our message, listen to the priorities of councils, and continue building a national network committed to reducing gambling harm.

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...the team were able to engage and form new connections with local governments across Australia.



"Who's Really Winning?" Webapp

A big thank you to all our Leadership Councils who took the time to stop by and say hello, it was a great opportunity to engage in person when so often our interactions are online based.

This year saw two new Victorian based councils join the Leadership Council program – Wangaratta and Casey councils, taking our membership numbers to 23.

The introduction of a dedicated Leadership Council Engagement Officer in March 2025 has provided the necessary resources for significant planning and engagement that has been crucial in shaping the way we will engage with our Leadership Council's in the future, including a dedicated area on our website with resources developed just to support our Leadership Council members. A monthly newsletter is just about to launch, and a number of campaigns and events are planned for the remainder of 2025.

We are very excited to share these increased benefits with our Leadership Councils, and look forward to working with councils over the next 12 months with a strong focus on our collective grass roots advocacy initiatives, and growing the opportunities and resources available to councils to support their incredible work to educate and lead on gambling harm reduction in their communities.



Alliance CEO – Martin Thomas with City of Monash Cr Stuart James.



Brimbank City Cr Virginia Tachos (L) with colleagues from Brimbank City Council.

Parliamentary Friends of Gambling Harm Reduction

On behalf of the Alliance for Gambling Reform, we would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to the Parliamentary Friends of Gambling Harm Reduction – a proudly non-partisan group – and in particular, its co-chairs, Mr Andrew Wilkie MP and Ms Rebekha Sharkie MP, for their steadfast support and advocacy for gambling reform over the past year.

By bringing together members of parliament from across the political spectrum, this group provides a rare and invaluable forum for engagement with decision-makers – one that is critical to driving meaningful and lasting policy change.

The Parliamentary Friends of Gambling Harm Reduction plays an especially important role in enabling the Alliance to connect directly with members of the Federal Parliament. By creating opportunities for us to share the stories and experiences of those who have lived through gambling harm, the group ensures that the human impact of this issue is heard, understood, and kept front of mind in parliamentary discussions.

Thank you for standing with us, for your tireless advocacy, and for your unwavering commitment to creating a safer and fairer Australia. We look forward to continuing our work together to push for urgent, evidence-based reforms that will protect individuals, families, and communities from the devastating effects of gambling harm.



*Rebekha Sharkie MP
Member for Mayo*



*Andrew Wilkie MP
Member for Clark*

MEDIA AND COMMUNICATIONS



10

Media and Communications

Over the past year, the Alliance has worked hard to keep gambling reform in the national spotlight.







We released 30 media releases and 12 opinion articles, and expanded our reach by launching new Instagram and TikTok channels to engage younger audiences. To strengthen our impact, we began producing videos tailored for social media and introduced paid advertising campaigns to broaden awareness of gambling harm.

A major highlight was publishing an Open Letter as a full-page advertisement in national newspapers, calling on the Federal Government to implement all 31 recommendations of the Murphy Report. This initiative turbo-charged our media coverage, delivering an editorial reach of 552 million in July and August 2024 alone.



Rev. Tim Costello on ABC News

Social Media

 f	7.4K Followers, Reaching 1.7M	 o	7.4K Followers, Reaching 1.7M
 X	1.6K Followers, Reaching 67K,	 ▶	120 Followers, Total Video Views 111K NEW
 in	356 Followers, Reaching 1.2M	 ♪	83 Followers, Reaching 66.6K NEW

We also ran a campaign highlighting the AFL and NRL's deep ties to gambling and the impact this is having on children and families. The Alliance led extensive media efforts to expose how gambling has become embedded in sport, ensuring this issue was placed front and centre in public debate.

In the lead-up to the federal election, we rolled out a comprehensive blitz campaign in key marginal electorates, using digital ads (social media, Google, YouTube), SMS and print ads. This campaign reached and engaged more than 130,000 voters directly.

To further amplify our message, we placed a full-page advertisement in The Canberra Times, published multiple op-ed articles in major newspapers, and strategically boosted this content across social media platforms. Our federal election campaign was highly successful, with our social media efforts reaching over 550,000 Australians, appearing in news feeds 1.5 million times, and generating more than 45,000 comments, reactions, and shares.

Through these combined efforts, we have not only expanded our visibility but ensured that gambling reform remains firmly on the public and political agenda.



CEO Martin Thomas on 9 News

The image features a collection of light-colored Scrabble tiles scattered on a light grey marble surface. The tiles are arranged in a semi-circular pattern on the left side, with some tiles showing letters like 'U', 'B', 'E', 'I', 'C', 'M', 'G', 'A', 'W', 'Y', 'T', and 'V'. A large, bright yellow geometric shape, resembling a stylized '11' or a corner, is positioned in the bottom right corner. The word 'GLOSSARY' is centered in the middle of the image in a bold, black, sans-serif font.

GLOSSARY

Glossary

ASIC – Australian Securities and Investments Commission

ACNC – Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission

AML/CTF – Australia's anti-money laundering and counter-terrorism financing regulations.

AUSTRAC – The Australian Transaction Reports and Analysis Centre – AUSTRAC is an Australian Government agency. It functions as Australia's financial intelligence unit and the anti-money laundering and counter-terrorism financing regulator,

BetStop – the National Self-Exclusion Register for online wagering. Australians can register with BetStop to voluntarily self-exclude from all Australian licensed interactive wagering service providers from a minimum of 3 months to a lifetime.

Cashless gambling – The gambling is entirely cashless with no ability to use cash (paper money) to play, even by transferring it on to a playing card, or to 'cash out' using paper money. This is considered the best protection against money laundering.

VGCCC – Victorian Gambling and Casino Control Commission

Mandatory carded play – A system that is required to be implemented by the venue. The use of the system becomes a prerequisite for playing in the venue. The card can be a physical card, or a card contained in a digital wallet, or even within an app.

Mandatory Cashless Carded Gambling with Pre-commitment – Variations of this term are used throughout the report. The reason for the varied terminology is due to the different Australian states considering poker machine reforms using different terms. The differences are subtle but important to the overall efficacy of the reform. The Alliance believes that Mandatory Cashless Gambling with Binding and Default Limits is the gold standard for reducing harm from poker machines.

Parliamentary Friends of Gambling Harm Reduction – This group provides a non-partisan forum for parliamentarians to meet and interact with the Alliance for Gambling Reform; to raise awareness of the impacts of gambling harm on Australians and discuss the ways Australia can reduce current levels of losses and gambling harm.

Pre-commitment – This allows for the user to set limits on the amount of money they are willing to lose. This can be mandatory for all users or voluntary. The limit could be set over sessions, days, weeks, months or years, depending on either regulation if mandatory or user settings if voluntary.

Wagering – Another way of saying 'betting'. Wagering usually refers to betting on sports and racing. The term 'gambling' is more commonly referred to playing poker machines or casino games.





ALLIANCE FOR GAMBLING REFORM

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The Alliance for Gambling Reform is a registered charity with the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profits Commission (ACNC) with DGR status. All donations over \$2 are fully tax deductible.