



ALLIANCE FOR
GAMBLING REFORM

ANNUAL REPORT 2022/23





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Alliance for Gambling Reform

Who we are and what we stand for

The Alliance for Gambling Reform (the Alliance) is the only national peak body working to reduce gambling harm. We have over 60 supporting organisations in our network and 23 leadership local councils in Victoria who have an interest in reducing the exponential level of gambling harm in Australia.

We are a registered health promotion charity and are 100% funded by donations 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

The Alliance has long advocated for public health reforms that are evidence-based and community-backed with the sole purpose of reducing and preventing gambling harm in Australia. Online gambling is increasingly becoming one of the biggest health issues we are facing as a country.

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.



Federal Independent MP Rebekah Sharkie, Alliance CEO Carol Bennett, Voices for Gambling Reform Manager Kate Seselja and Federal Independent MP Andrew Wilkie

Our Strategic Objectives



Continue Victorian Advocacy on land-based gambling reform in Victoria and extend nationally



Provide national leadership and coalition building in priority focus areas of land-based gambling, digital online gambling and sports gambling



Increasing organisational effectiveness and sustainability

Trusts and Foundations

Trusts and Foundations

We are grateful for the support of major donors, both previous and current including the Reichstein Foundation, Ross Trust, Equity Trustees, Australian Community Foundation. We thank them and look forward to our continuing partnership.



Leadership Councils

Local Government Leadership Councils

Our network of over 20 Leadership Councils in Victoria are vital to the work of the Alliance. We thank them for their participation, leadership and support in reducing harm from gambling in local communities.



Message from Chair Sharon Dickson



Sharon Dickson
Chair

While we have seen some substantial activity in gambling reform in the last year, we have also been witness to some staggering examples of ethical and governance failures on the part of leadership and boards in the gambling industry. This tells a story of a sector that has been largely under-regulated and not held accountable for its actions.

While it was disappointing not to see the Crown directors and officers held accountable for their clear lack of ethical or non-financial responsibility, it was equally pleasing that ASIC made its expectations known when it comes to directors' management of risk when it launched a case against Star's board and their executives in relation to money laundering and criminal associations. In addition to action against the Star directors by AUSTRAC and State regulators, ASIC has alleged that the individual directors failed in their duty of care and diligence.

This is the first time that ASIC has pursued an entire board for alleged breaches of their duties. It has wide implications for the scope of statutory duty of care and diligence and will bring to light the onus on directors of Star to comply with regulatory obligations. This case will no doubt serve as a timely reminder to other gambling company directors that they must apply due diligence which includes testing and probing the adequacy of controls but also scanning the external environment when considering their responsibilities.

Current indicators would suggest a heightened awareness and community concern about the application of due diligence by directors serving on boards of the gambling companies when it comes to their responsibility to reduce gambling harm. It also begs the question of the stance of the many industry peak bodies and their own responsibilities, their ethical and social license?

The recent and very public ruckus at Endeavour points to the friction that this increased focus and pressure is causing among directors of gambling companies. The Endeavour example highlights differing points of view about the degree to which their financial interests should be placed ahead of their ethical and social license. This example extends beyond to other industries which place a premium on their ESG (ethical, social and governance) license. Directors of clubs that are involved in gambling need to consider their core beliefs with the harm caused to others by their organisation's business model.

The odds are in the favour of the house, and communities are the losers. Directors must consider that just because the harm doesn't happen to them, that the impact of gambling doesn't matter to them and impact their responsibilities as directors. We see the ground swell of communities fighting back to "the powers that be" to have locations where families can socialise and be comfortable without the overlay of gambling.

The Alliance's recent analysis of superannuation company data '*Australian Superannuation Fund Investments in Gambling*' has revealed that the ten biggest funds all hold at least one major gambling shareholding in their portfolio. I believe that most Australians would be shocked by the level of investment that their superannuation funds have made in gambling shareholdings.

Some funds are promoting ethical products within their portfolio that may not exclude gambling shares. There is an urgent need for the Federal Government to enact improved superannuation fund portfolio holdings disclosure requirements, and to fund an independent agency rating and certification of superannuation products. This includes Australia's sovereign wealth fund, the Future Fund which, as of 30 June 2023, invests over \$257 million in Artiscrat as its thirty second largest investment of 100 top investments. One major Australian industry super fund, Hesta, which boasts one million members and which promotes itself as a responsible investor - holds more than \$351 million in gambling-relating equities.

Superfunds investing billions in gambling stocks

Disclosure regime 'patently inadequate' to hold funds accountable

One major Australian industry super fund - which boasts one million members and which promotes itself as a responsible investor - holds more than \$351 million in gambling-relating equities, according to new analysis by the Alliance for Gambling Reform.



Alex is a consumer, who is outraged at HESTA's investments. (Image credit to Joe Armao, The Age/ Sydney Morning Herald)

Just like gambling companies, superannuation funds have a responsibility to act responsibly and ethically rather than engaging in public relations messaging that could be seen to amount to greenwashing.

The Alliance board have had a busy year with a strong focus on strategy and risk management in a time of heightened awareness of gambling harm and increased demand for the Alliance. While this is a good problem to have, there remains a fundamental disconnect between the concern expressed by the community about gambling harm, and the investment in prevention and harm reduction by all levels of government.

In May 2023, the Public Health Association of Australia partnered with the Alliance to host Australia's first ever conference "Tackling gambling harm in Australia". Members of federal and state governments as well as health and community stakeholders attended the event in Adelaide.

Government at state and federal level reap enormous revenue from this industry and they must be part of the solution to reducing gambling harm. This is a major public health issue as is tobacco and alcohol. The platitudes of reducing harm seem hollow when there is no funded independent national peak body for gambling harm. The Alliance which is the only national organisation working to minimise gambling harm, is not supported in any way by any government.

The Alliance board continues to work towards this goal with the support of our Leadership Councils, funders and supporters. Our impact is strongly underpinned by our Voices for Gambling Reform who provide powerful stories of their lived experience.

Our management and staff team are passionate, highly competent and are committed to working with the board and our stakeholders to achieve an Australia free from gambling harm.

Chair Sharon Dickson

Our Board



Sharon Dickson
Chair



Karen Carey
Deputy Chair



Amanda Power
Treasurer



Elizabeth O'Shea
Secretary



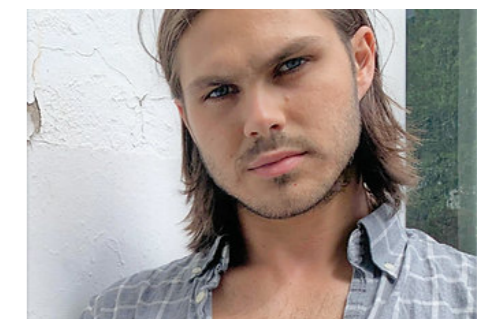
Pita Williams
Board Member



Kathy Richardson
Board Member



Tim Lo Surdo
Board Member



Ethan Taylor
Board Member

Thank you!

Thanks to all of our Leadership Councils, Funders and Supporters, you play a vital role as we work towards an Australia free from gambling harm.

Message from CEO Carol Bennett



Carol Bennett
CEO

The last year has seen a significant increase in awareness of gambling as a harmful product. While it's still early days, the country with the biggest losses and harms to gambling is starting to accept that it has a gambling problem. This acknowledgement is long overdue.

When I wrote my CEO report last year, I had only been in the role for 6 months. I had been surprised to find that gambling wasn't considered a public health issue similar to alcohol, tobacco and other potentially harmful products that need to be appropriately regulated and addressed through prevention and treatment programs. When people talked about gambling harms, they were often referring to the gambling industry incurring some kind of loss.

Gambling had been actively normalised, downplayed as entertainment, and was seen as a part of our culture, part of 'community life' in Australia. As I lamented at the time, 'Gambling as a public health issue seems a daunting and distant prospect.'

A lot has changed in a relatively short time. A confluence of factors has contributed to a tipping point where public perceptions of gambling are shifting and governments are playing catch up.

We have seen a myriad of inquiries, reviews and Royal Commissions - all of which the Alliance participated in from Royal Commissions into Crown Casino in Melbourne and Perth to inquiries into both Star Sydney and Queensland, and an ongoing inquiry into SkyCity Adelaide. All of these inquiries and commissions have exposed deeply concerning practices from widespread money laundering to criminal activity and failure on the part the gambling industry to accept its legal responsibility for reducing growing levels of harm.

At the same time we were highlighting the harms, the community were growing weary of the ongoing bombardment of gambling advertising and inducements.

It wasn't just on our screens where we had to face daily gambling promotions, many of our communities have gambling venues as part of their sporting clubs and shopping precincts. We are the only country in the world that has mini casinos in every suburb in the form of pubs and clubs with poker machines, Keno, bingo and other forms of gambling.

Imagine the impact on our children now growing up in a world where gambling is fundamental to sport, media, online gaming, and in some cases, even a trip to the local shopping centre.

Every politician I have spoken to in the last twelve months has indicated that gambling and in particular, incessant advertising is raised with them on a regular basis by their constituents. And community surveys have demonstrated that there is a strong level of dissatisfaction with unacceptably high levels of advertising, promotion and inducements.

In fact, there are a million gambling ads a year on free to air TV in Australia! And we are not counting streaming services in these figures.



Federal Labor MP Peta Murphy, CEO Carol Bennett

Of course, our gambling industry provides hefty benefits to governments and political parties in the form of revenue and donations. In return, the industry is heavily compensated with subsidies (for the racing industry), significant tax breaks and lax regulation. And the industry has a seat at decision making tables about its interests in the form of 'co-regulation'.

Despite all the challenges and operating on a tiny budget compared to the big gambling companies, the Alliance has had some major wins over the last 12 months.

A huge thank you to all who contributed to these very significant achievements towards reducing gambling harm reduction.

A special thanks to our Chief Advocate, the Rev Tim Costello for being the public and very credible face of our organisation alongside some courageous and forceful lived experience advocates.

A big thanks to our Chair Sharon Dickson and our board for their exceptional governance and strategic leadership.

Our amazing hard-working team couldn't do our work without the outstanding 23 leadership councils, funders and supporters who all provide invaluable support to the Alliance.

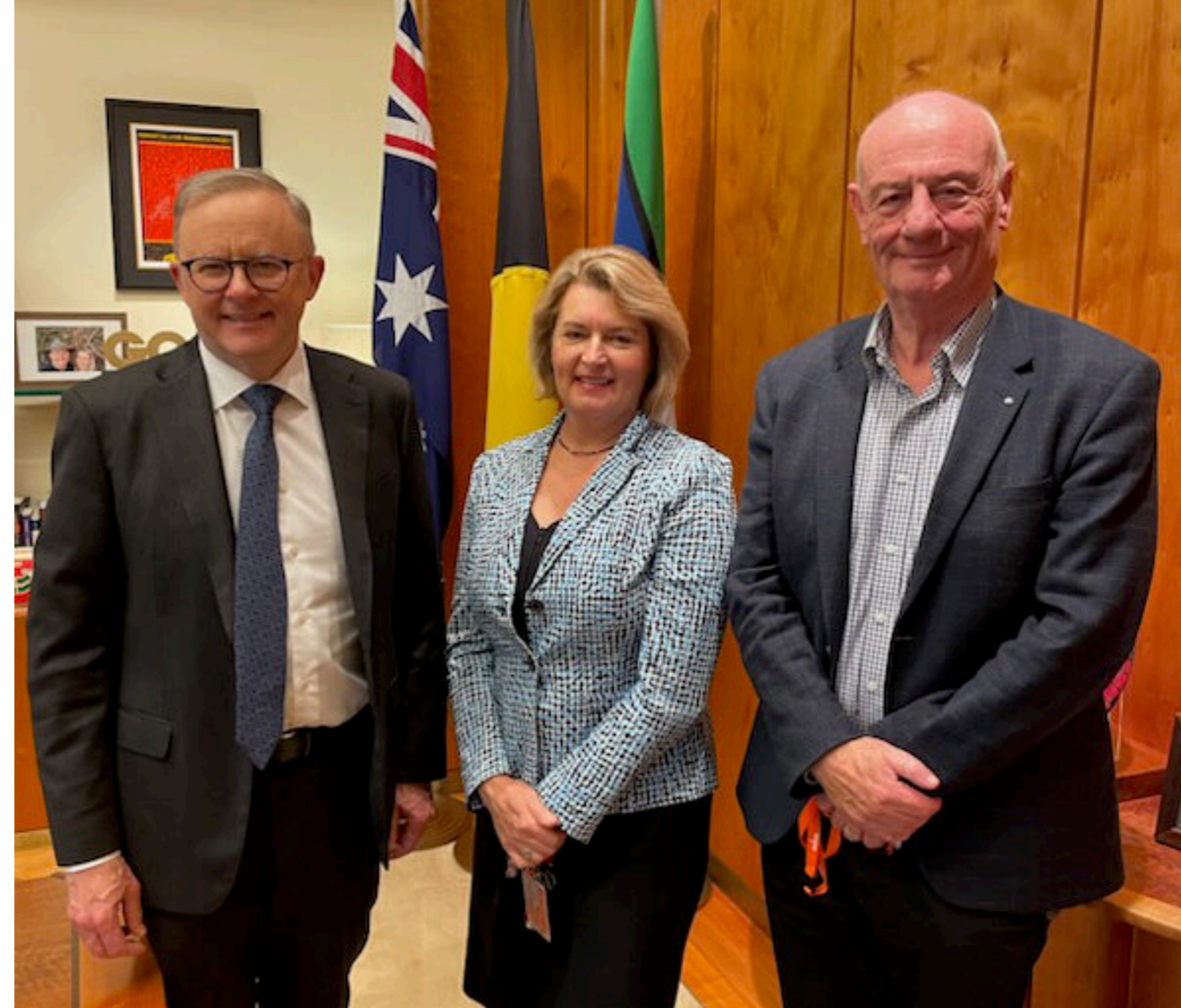
We look forward to another incredible year of reform as the transformational changes of the past year are implemented to reduce gambling harm across all our communities.

Thank you again for your support and encouragement in what has been a remarkable year of challenges and positive change.

CEO Carol Bennett



Dini Soulio Commissioner Consumer and Business Services, CEO Carol Bennett and Federal Labor MP Peta Murphy



(Top) The Honourable Anthony Albanese Prime Minister, CEO Carol Bennett, Chief Advocate Reverend Tim Costello
 (Bottom Left) Federal Independent MPs Zoe Daniels and Kate Chaney, Chief Advocate Reverend Tim Costello, CEO Carol Bennett
 (Bottom Right) Federal Independent MP Rebekah Sharkie, Chief Advocate Reverend Tim Costello, CEO Carol Bennett

Message from Chief Advocate Reverend Tim Costello AO



Rev Tim Costello AO
Chief Advocate

After close to 30 years championing the need for Australia to acknowledge it has a gambling problem and curb the growing losses and harms that go hand in hand with an out of control industry, I am pleased to report that the past year has seen some significant changes.

The Alliance, on the smell of an oily rag, has been stretched to respond to the clamour of requests for comment. We issued 81 media releases, 16 opinion pieces and undertook hundreds of media interviews on all major media platforms.

They ranged from the adoption of a cashless card as a key election issue in NSW to a ban on gambling ads. From a moratorium on poker machines in Alice Springs to Crown and Star casinos continuing to operate despite being found to be unsuitable to hold a license. And on it goes. Gambling is now firmly on the public agenda which, by definition, means it is also on the political agenda.

Our meetings with politicians across the political divide informed us that they are hearing from their constituents in droves about their disdain at saturation advertising and a growing concern for their children targeted by a rapacious gambling industry. This includes meetings with the Prime Minister Albanese, Leader of the Opposition, Ministers Rishworth and Rowland, Greens and the important federal crossbenchers who have been strong champions for gambling reform as well as key state politicians.

We provided evidence to the *Federal Inquiry into online gambling and its impact on those experiencing gambling harm* in December 2022 – the first witnesses to present. It was a once in a generation opportunity to see the role of the Federal Government in regulating gambling put under the spotlight. Our submissions, evidence, and the powerful testimony of our voices for gambling reform featured strongly in the report of the Inquiry.

The Parliamentary Inquiry report featured 31 recommendations providing a clear statement of the detrimental impact that online gambling is having in our community and the roadmap for changing the current trajectory. We are eagerly awaiting the Federal Government's response in the hope that they have listened to this important multiparty parliamentary committee, as well as recognising community support for a ban on gambling ads among other harm reduction measures.

I was delighted to be part of the first ever national gambling harm conference *Social justice meets public health: tackling gambling harm in Australia* – a joint Alliance and Public Health Association of Australia event that brought together the leading experts and those impacted by lived experience of gambling harm. These are important conversations and an important opportunity to bring together the key people in the gambling sector to collaborate on the way forward.

And who would have thought a year ago that we would have a Federal Parliamentary Friends of Gambling Harm Reduction group with representation across the parliament in addition to a national inquiry into online gambling and its impact on those with lived experience!

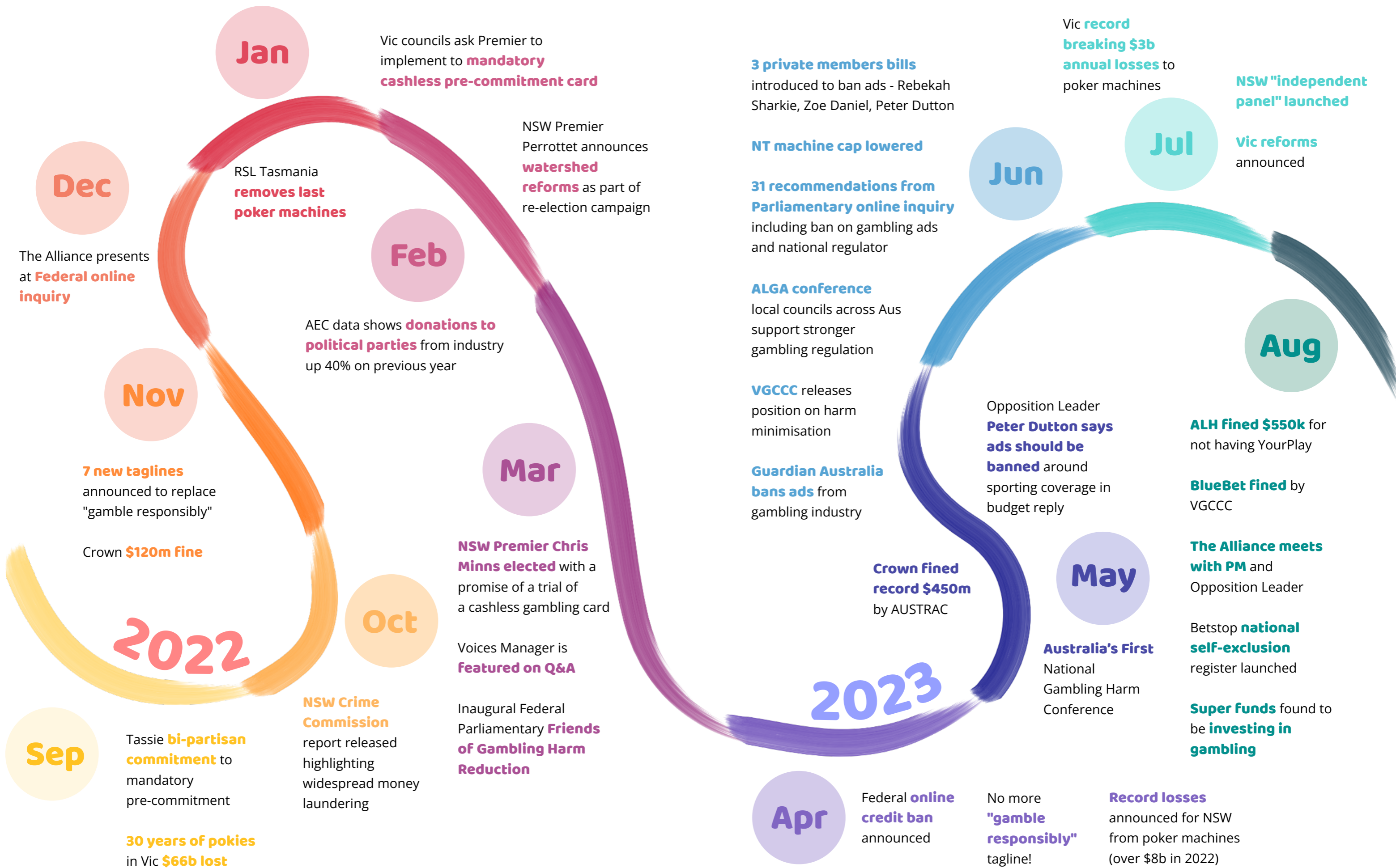
Times are slowly changing, but we shouldn't forget that while there is an increased focus on gambling and its impact, the losses especially from the most harmful gambling product, poker machines, continue to grow at a staggering rate, and the health, social and economic harms continue to stack up.

It's time for our leaders to embrace the inevitable change and accept responsibility for one of our country's biggest blind spots. I do hope that my message next year will be one of hope and optimism for an Australia breaking free of the gambling industry shackles and actually reducing the devastation that is gambling harm in Australia.

Chief Advocate Reverend Tim Costello



Chief Advocate Reverend Tim Costello and CEO Carol Bennett meet with Federal Independent Senator David Pocock at Parliament House.



The BIG Stories

1. Momentum!

Considerable research and policy development, as well as advocacy and significant media contributed to unprecedented public debate in every state across Australia. We met with numerous state politicians across the year to further this discussion. Federally, we had the chance to meet with many MPs and senators, including the Prime Minister, Leader of the Opposition, Greens and key independents. All of this has resulted in growing momentum on the desperate need for gambling reform and regulation Australia-wide, and we look forward to seeing this continued with governments taking decisive action to protect our communities from harm.

2. The Federal Parliamentary Inquiry into Online Gambling

The Inquiry announced in September 2022 gave advocates much to focus on in the last year. The Alliance gave evidence at the hearings in December 2022, along with lived experience advocates who provided great insight into the harms being experienced in the community due to an unchecked industry. The report handed down in June with 31 recommendations including a ban on gambling advertising across all platforms phased in over three years, and a recommendation for a national regulator and ombudsman recognising the need for strong and decisive action to protect all Australians from gambling harm online. We eagerly await the Government's official response, and hope they choose to accept all 31 recommendations.

3. Federal Parliamentary Friends of Gambling Harm Reduction

Interest in reducing gambling harm was strong in Federal Parliament, with the establishment of the Federal Parliamentary Friends of Gambling Harm Reduction group – the first meeting was held in March 2023. It's great to see that so many Federal parliamentarians are keen to learn more and do more about gambling harm.

4. Australia's first Gambling Harm Symposium

For the first time, public health experts, academics, government officials, politicians, journalists, advocates and voices of lived experience gathered for a day to discuss a public health approach to gambling harm. The Alliance was pleased to partner with the Public Health Association of Australia to host Australia's first ever conference "*Tackling gambling harm in Australia*". This jam-packed symposium had attendees coming to Adelaide in May from every state and territory in Australia.

5. End Gambling Ads

We worked with Federal MPs and Senators supporting a ban on gambling advertising and saw private members bills from Opposition Leader Peter Dutton, Rebekah Sharkie MP and Zoe Daniels MP. In his budget reply speech, Peter Dutton called for an extended ad ban before and after sports matches. The Alliance has been running our End Gambling Ads campaign and hearing from Aussie's fed up with how many ads they are seeing and hearing. We are expecting that all of this interest will lead the Federal Government to make some changes in this area and are actively providing advice to the Federal Minister for Communications, Michelle Rowland and her department on how this could work.

6. Federal Government legislative reform

The Federal Government announced a ban on credit for online gambling, a change which has been welcomed by the Alliance. We provided a submission and reviewed draft legislation to enact this much needed reform.

The Alliance was thrilled to see the introduction of legislation for minimum classifications for video games with gambling like features, also known as lootboxes. These features will only be available on games rated 15+. The legislation also restricts online casinos to those aged 18+.

April 2023 saw the roll out of seven new taglines to be used in gambling advertising, replacing the stigmatising "gamble responsibly". More realistic warnings such as "Chances are you're about to lose" and "You win some, you lose more" are an exciting move towards Australia putting the onus on the dangerous product, and not the individual being harmed.

7. Betstop

Introduction of the national self-exclusion scheme, Betstop in August 2023 was a huge win for protecting consumers from gambling harm, allowing them to self-exclude from all licensed online and phone gambling operators either temporarily or permanently. The Alliance provided advice to government on the changes and are still providing advice post implementation.

8. Casino inquiries

Our casino inquiry submissions and support for ensuring the voices of people with lived experience of gambling harm are heard has highlighted significant failures of casino regulation in Australia over the last few years. The Alliance was cited 11 times in the most recent report into the Star Casino Queensland and many of our recommendations were front and centre in the key findings.

Crown were fined record amounts. We continue to actively provide input to each of these reviews, ongoing investigations and reforms.

9. Tassie leads the way

In September 2022 the Tasmanian Government announced bi-partisan commitment to a mandatory pre-commitment gambling with binding and default limits, the first Aussie jurisdiction to announce such strong measures state-wide. Unfortunately bi-partisan support is now at risk so we have been meeting with key independents and the government in the hope of seeing the roll out of the system as planned by the end of 2024. The limits of \$100 per day, \$500 per month and \$5000 a year are binding and when implemented Tasmania will have the strongest pre-commitment system in Australia.

And another winning reform move in Tasmania - RSL Tasmania made the decision in January 2023 that the last of their poker machines would be removed from their clubs by June 2023. Go Tassie!

10. Northern Territory Moratorium

The moratorium in Alice Springs preventing the expansion of at least 60 new poker machine licenses ceases with a reduced machine cap after our work with No Pokies Mwarptne (an Alice Springs based group campaigning to reduce gambling harm especially among indigenous communities).

11. Election campaign heralds long-overdue attention to gambling harm in NSW

It was about time the state that loses more to poker machines than all the other states and territories combined started to talk about reform. Spurred on by a NSW Crime Commission report which highlighted widespread money laundering through poker machines, and ongoing pressure from the Alliance, Premier Perrotet made a commitment to a cashless gambling card while then Opposition Leader Chris Minns countered with an offer of a cashless trial.

The Alliance released our policy on *Mandatory Cashless Gambling Cards* in January. Since becoming Premier in March, Minns has taken steps to deliver on his commitments with a ban on political donations, venue signage ban, and for the first time, no MOU has been signed with Clubs NSW. A trial of a cashless system is still the preferred avenue for the Government, despite plenty of past trials and reams of research telling us this is the gold standard method to reduce harm from poker machines.

12. Victoria and ACT considering reforms

Victorians were taken by surprise by gambling reforms announced by then Premier Daniel Andrews in July 2023. After a November 2022 election which had not seen any traction on our gambling advocacy on mandatory closing hours for pokie venues, it was pleasing to see the Government commit to uniform closures of 4am to 10am from August 2024. Other changes include a consultation on a mandatory gambling card, if implemented in the right way, this could provide significant protections to Victorians from poker machine harms. This is now also being considered in the ACT.

Advocacy and Policy

The NSW State election campaign was significant with both major parties, as well as independents, making commitments to gambling harm reduction. We engaged with supporters and councils, sending them correspondence and resources, and candidates received information about our policy platform.

It was pleasing to see that gambling harm was one of the main issues featured in the election, given NSW has Australia's largest losses to Pokies. This discussion was furthered by a great deal of media surrounding the commitments and NSW history with poker machines, including a shocking 7.30 Report piece which shed light on extent of the intimidatory tactics of the industry.



This year saw us criss-crossing the continent (as well as spending a lot of time meeting online!) as we met with MPs from different states and territories to discuss gambling reform. The Alliance is excited to have so many MPs from across the political spectrum advocating on state and national gambling reforms.



Rose O'Leary, Advocacy and Policy Lead, CEO Carol Bennett, and Victorian Greens MP Katherine Copsey

The Alliance played a key role by making submissions and advocating as the conduct of casinos around Australia continued to be the subject of intense scrutiny from regulators and integrity bodies, as well as some significant financial penalties.



The Alice Springs community put up a huge fight against applications for additional poker machines in their town and we were so pleased to lend our support to this grassroots campaign.



ABC News: Xavier Martin

In Victoria, we used the November state election to call for reforms to pubs and clubs across the state. We wanted to make sure that issues addressed through the Royal Commission into the casino, didn't spread to suburban venues where regulations are less stringent.

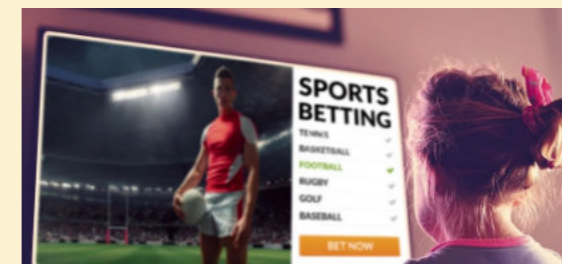


Former Victorian Premier Daniel Andrews

Our 'End Gambling Harm After Dark' campaign, calling for a ban on allowing venues with poker machines to stagger their opening hours in Victoria was a victory for many years of advocacy from passionate supporters. Venues in Victoria will need to have their poker machine room closed from 4am to 10am. We'd like to see this extended so that all venues close at midnight, but this is a good start!



The End Gambling Ads campaign continues to grow, with more Australians signing up to ban ads every day. As we speak to communities across Australia, it's the one message we hear loud and clear, 'Can you do something about all the ads?! I'm sick of having to put up with them when all I want to do is watch TV. And I'm really worried about kids who know about odds than they do about players. You need to make sure the politicians do something about this!'

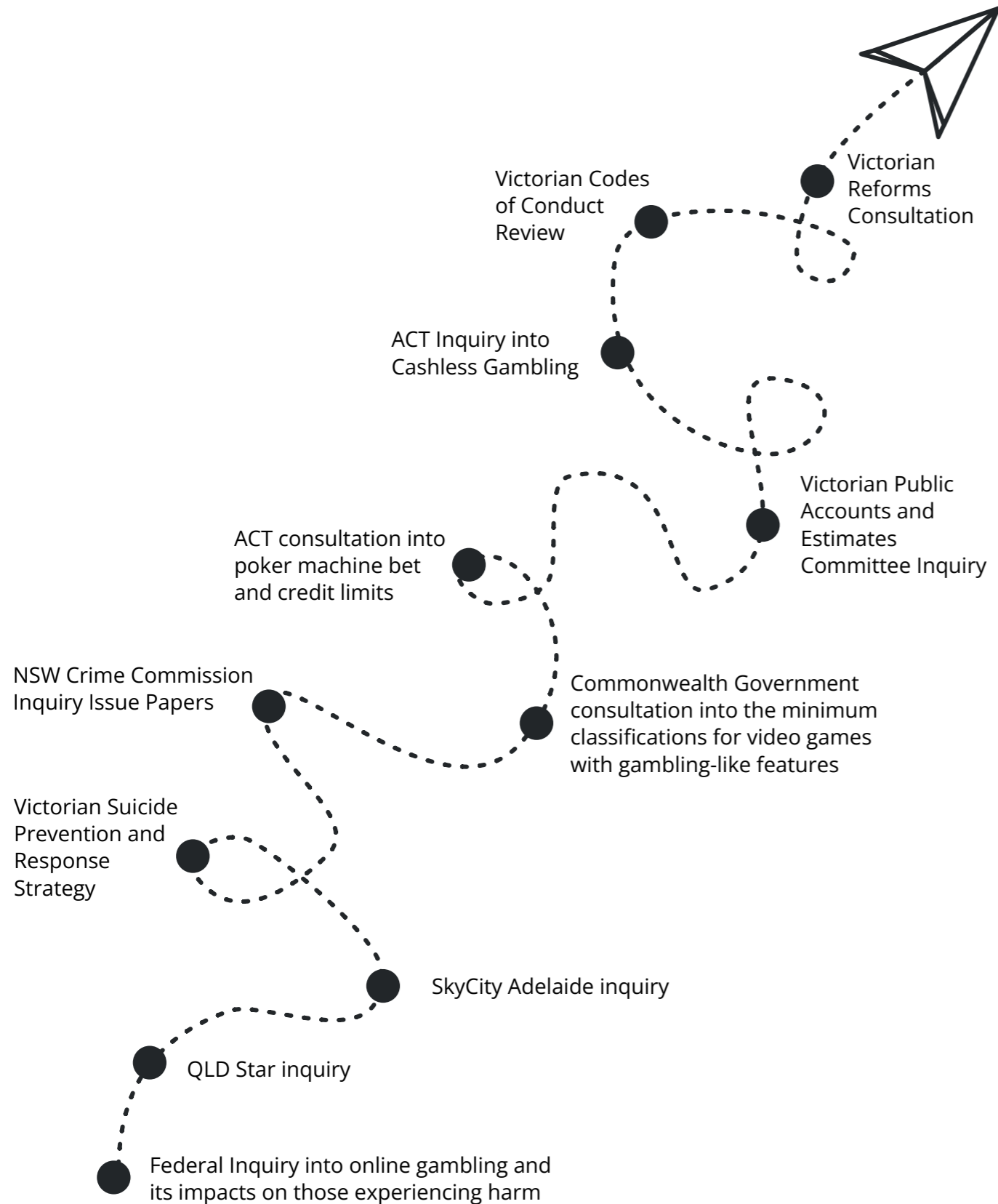


September 2022 marked 30 years since poker machines were introduced in Victoria (to stop all those taxes going across the border to NSW!). The Alliance worked with The Age newspaper to highlight the harm experienced by Victorians over those three decades, including devastating losses of

\$66 billion.

Submissions in 2022/23

The Alliance continued to respond swiftly to investigations Australia-wide into the gambling industry and gambling regulations.



Alliance policies in 2022/23



Voices for Gambling Reform

In the course of this financial year, our Voices for Gambling Reform have achieved remarkable success. Voices of lived experience have made a significant impact on shaping the narrative surrounding gambling reform and actively countering industry perspectives.

Key Highlights

Parliamentary Friends of Gambling Harm Reduction

Gavin Fineff continued his campaign to push for reform in powerful letters presented to key politicians by his mym Lyn at the inaugural meeting.

Harry had the opportunity to share his personal journey at Parliament House and address the newly established 'Parliamentary Friends of Gambling Harm Reduction' group where every person in the room was deeply moved as they listened to his experience of gambling harm.



Gavin Fineff

Voices in the news

The Alliance Voices also featured in several front-page stories in major newspapers across Australia, as well as featuring on the Project, BBC, and Aljazeera news. And too many radio interviews to count!



Kate Seselja at Q&A

The Federal Inquiry

Voices members submitting and presenting evidence to the *Federal Inquiry into Online Gambling and its impacts on those experiencing gambling harm.*



Harry, speaking to Federal Labor MP Peta Murphy at the Inaugural Federal Parliamentary Friends of Gambling Harm Reduction



Harry, speaking at Parliament House, watched on by CEO Carol Bennett and Federal Independent MPs Rebekah Sharkie and Andrew Wilkie



Harry, supported by his Father, along with CEO Carol Bennett, Voices for Gambling Reform Manager Kate Seselja, Federal Independent MPs Rebekah Sharkie and Andrew Wilkie at Parliament House

First National Gambling Harm Conference

Held in Adelaide (with many attendees also joining virtually); the symposium was a first for bringing so many experts together to tackle gambling harm as a public health issue! Voices of lived experience featured heavily in the program, openly sharing their stories and the lessons learned, and calling for continued reform to prevent gambling harm throughout Australia.

Anna Bardsely, Paul Fung, Kate Seselja and Shonica Guy were all truly captivating. We thank them immensely for their courageous leadership and dedication to reducing gambling harm and know they made a big impact on everyone at the symposium.



Minister for Casino, Gaming and Liquor Regulation, Melissa Horne MP, Fred Rubenstein, CEO of North Melbourne Football Club community 'The Huddle', Cameron McLeod, event MC, Chief Advocate Rev Tim Costello

Community Forum

Fred Rubenstein presented at a community forum in Airport West, Victoria where his story shared in front of numerous state and local politicians, including the Hon. Melissa Horne MP, Minister for Casino, Gaming and Liquor Regulation.



EM Professor Mike Daube, Commissioner Consumer and Business Services Dini Soulio, CEO Carol Bennett and Voices for Gambling Reform Manager Kate Seselja make recommendations in the closing session at the Tackling gambling harm in Australia symposium

Poker Machine Reforms in Victoria

Voices for Gambling Reform stood side by side with then Premier, Daniel Andrews in July as he announced a number of reforms to reduce harm from poker machines. It was a proud moment with lived experience of gambling harm being such a big part of why the Premier announced important reforms.

We were very happy to hear the news that Victoria would move to uniform closing hours for pubs and clubs, which will close from 4am to 10am every day as we have long campaigned for mandatory closing hours. We hope to see these closure times lengthened in the future, but this is a significant step in the right direction.

The Premier also announced carded play for Victoria and we are hopeful that the State Government will continue to listen to the voices of lived experience as the government shapes just how this will be implemented – the details are key to a system that effectively reduces gambling harm.



Voices for Gambling Reform Coordinator Bardsley and former Premier of Victoria Daniel Andrews

Keep Molongo Pokies Free!



ACT MLA Marisa Paterson along with Alliance CEO Carol Bennett and Voices for Gambling Reform Manager Kate Seselja, with others at the 'Keep Molongo Pokie-Free' launch

Voices Manager, Kate Seselja was thrilled to take part in the announcement of Dr Marisa Paterson MP's legislation to Keep Molonglo Pokies Free!

For those outside the ACT, Molonglo is a new region of Canberra, and Dr Paterson's legislation has ensured that no poker machine licenses will ever be permitted there. A groundbreaking step to prevent gambling harm for future generations.

Kate and other Voices provided key input into the development of the legislation.

Work with Councils

In the last year we have seen councils truly showing leadership when it comes to preventing gambling harm in their community.

During both the Victorian and NSW elections and since those polls, we have seen individual councillors, and councils moving motions, writing letters to candidates and leaders and doing everything they possibly could to tackle an industry that has had a vice-like grip on our nation.

In early 2023, Victorian councils took the initiative to write to then Premier Daniel Andrews calling on the government to bring in mandatory cashless gambling in Victoria.

This advocacy no doubt played a part in the Premier announcing in July that the government was looking to bring in mandatory carded play, uniform closing hours of 4am-10am for all pubs and clubs and reduced spin rates. All councils who became involved in this advocacy in one way or another should be applauded for taking such a strong stance on behalf of their community.

The State quickly commenced consultation on this reform and while we have yet to see the final details of exactly what this will look like, we are encouraged by the fact that voices of lived experience, the community, councils and advocacy bodies such as the Alliance have been consulted along the way.

It was wonderful engaging with so many council officers at the Alliance workshops held to support councils to develop robust submissions to the consultation, as well drawing on their views to strengthen our own position.

Let's hope that the government introduces legislation for a mandatory cashless card with binding and default limits that research says is the gold standard for reducing harm from poker machines. The legislation for closing hours has already been through the upper house.

Victoria is in desperate need of strong reform, after figures showed a staggering \$66 billion has been lost in Victoria to pokies since being brought in 30 years ago. In the 2022/23 financial year, losses were the highest ever at over \$3 billion. Councils across Victoria and indeed most of Australia are dealing with growing gambling harm impacts throughout their communities from both poker machines and all other types of gambling. This makes our work to support and advocate with our leadership councils more important than ever before.

This year has seen two applications for additional machines considered by the Victorian Gambling and Casino Control Commission (VGCCC) in Glen Eira and Port Phillip.

While both applications were approved, the Commission asked the venues to draft harm minimisation statements on the conditions to the decisions that require the venues to go over and above the requirements in the Responsible Gambling Code of Conduct for venues.

These decisions were made before June when the VGCCC adopted their position statement on harm minimisation. The statement, sets out seven key principles, including that;

- gambling causes harm
- harm is preventable
- gambling providers have a duty to care for the wellbeing of their customers and their communities

This position is without a doubt the most progressive, public health based that we have seen from an Australian gambling regulator.

Victorian councils faced with applications in their municipality should take heart from these words which indicate a paradigm shift in the attitude and remit of the Commission. We will see how effective this position is in practice when the VGCCC hears upcoming applications in both Wyndham and Maribyrnong.

This last twelve months has been busy with councils considering gambling harm prevention policies across Victoria and the Alliance has been working with councils at different stages along the journey to ensure that policies are strong, decisive and evidence backed.

Well done to all officers on the huge piece of work it is to develop or review gambling policies in the context of an ever-changing gambling landscape in Australia.



CEO Carol Bennett and Councils and Supporters Manager Rebecca Paterson at the ALGA conference in June pictured with councillors and officers from councils across Australia showing their support to #EndGamblingAds



Lauren Levin, Financial Counselling Australia's Director of Advocacy and Campaigns giving a briefing to councillors and officers

Given the frequent changes to gambling products and regulation, we are finding that most councils updating their policies are seeking to include avenues to advocate regarding online gambling in addition to local land-based gambling. Many councils are also taking strong stances when it comes to the promotion of gambling venues and activities on council land, or the awarding of council funding to groups or organisations that meet in or promote gambling venues or activities. These are great examples of how councils can tackle harm from different angles beyond planning decisions.

This year we were privileged to have Lauren Levin, Financial Counselling Australia's Director of Advocacy and Campaigns give a briefing to councillors and officers.

Lauren was awarded a Churchill Fellowship to study gambling harm prevention in eight European countries. In late 2022, she spent eight weeks meeting with their gambling regulators, as well as UK banks, academics, and others in the gambling harm prevention eco-system. She also went to an international gambling industry convention to gain insight into what the gambling industry is doing and anticipating.

It was an eye-opener for all of us as Lauren explained why these countries have tougher gambling regulation than Australia. The answer? The politicians have the conviction to take strong steps to regulate the industry.

CEO Carol Bennett and Councils and Supporters Manager Rebecca Paterson attended the Australian Local Government Association annual conference in Canberra this year and met with councillors and officers keen on reducing gambling harm in their communities.

It was even more pleasing to see ambitious motions on gambling reform from two Alliance Leadership Councils, Brimbank and Manningham which were overwhelmingly supported by the majority of councils Australia-wide.

Not surprising that local government representatives have views on the need for gambling reform that align so strongly with what the community is telling us about gambling and gambling advertising.

We've all had enough. Hopefully this strong desire for change trickles up to state and federal members of parliament and we can one day soon see an Australia free from gambling harm.

This year we welcomed Mt Alexander Shire to our growing group of Leadership Councils and it is exciting to have been able to talk to so many other councils this year that have indicated that becoming an Alliance member is in their future plans. We are hopeful that the coming year will see greater engagement with councils outside of Victoria, as we really believe that their involvement and advocacy is an untapped resource to protect communities from gambling harm.

So no matter where you are in Australia, we'd love to support your council to take a strong stance on gambling harm. Please reach out to find out more.



Councils and Supporters Manager Rebecca Paterson, Maroondah councillor, Kylie Spears and Coral Ross

Community Engagement

Social media

Our social media campaigns have been thriving with a combined following of over 10,000 supporters across Facebook, LinkedIn, and X (formally Twitter).

Our primary cities of engagement are Melbourne and Sydney, closely followed by Adelaide, Brisbane, and Perth.

Our followers have shown immense enthusiasm in celebrating our collective efforts in advocating for gambling reforms through various meetings with independents, working together to #BringHomeGamblingReforms.

Additionally, we've received tremendous support in congratulating the #PokiesFreePubs that have emerged in local communities throughout Australia.

We also had some fun moments with our #PokieFreePies post as we cheered for #TheMightyPies during the AFL Grand Final.

We sincerely appreciate all of our followers for their unwavering support and engagement. Thank you!

It is so good that the Alliance has access to **independent parliamentary representatives** on matters of gambling reform.

It's time to **protect consumers** not the industry.

Good to see all the work on gambling ads and online gambling in all its forms. If only this relatively early advocacy and action would work to stop people from losing everything important to them.

The regulatory body has to **crack down on this industry.**

The screen size need to be reduced. Losing sound needs to be added The near misses need to be banned.

Sports betting is out of control, all the kids are getting hooked, very very sad.

I have 3 young grandsons who have only ever seen gambling as part of footy.

I'm **sick and tired** of seeing gambling advertisements on TV! They have reached 'saturation point' and I want them stopped!
Gambling ruins lives!

Anything that reduces gambling, in any way, is a good thing.

AFL need to **listen** to the supporters who **want this addressed.**

Your Voice

Gambling reform is bruising, hard and tiring work. There are many Australians who thank you deeply for it, including me on a personal level. **There is hope at last for real change.**

Your Voice Poll insights - The Spirit of the game

Does seeing gambling ads during the AFL or NRL make watching the game less enjoyable?

97% voted: YES

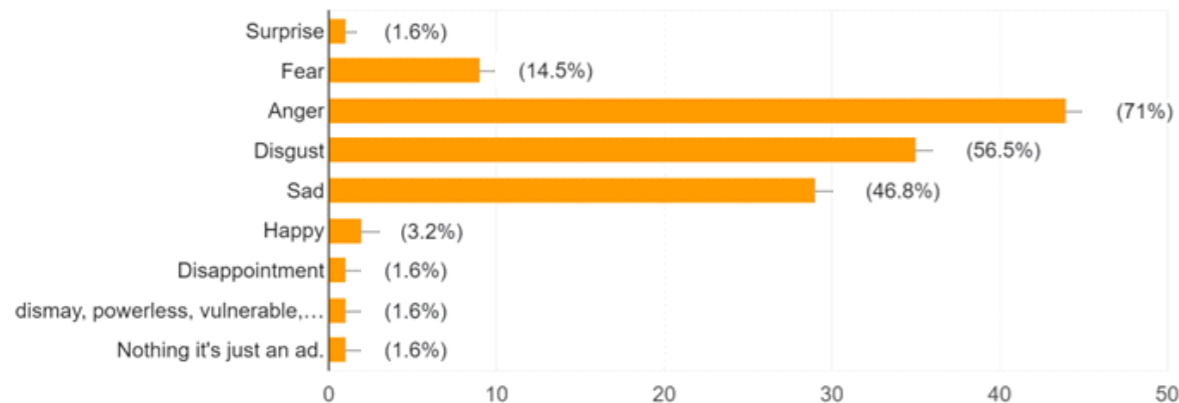
Do you think gambling ads during a game may encourage a person to gamble for the first time?

98% voted YES!

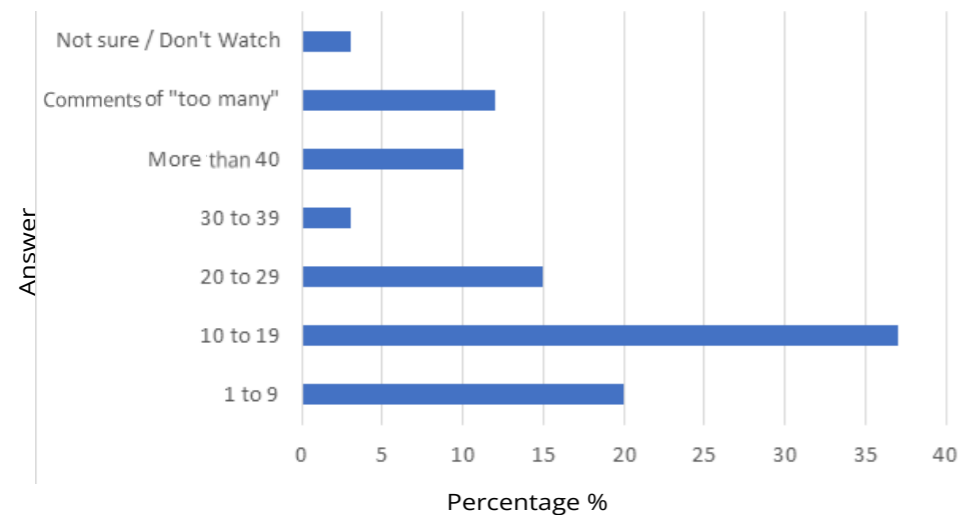
How distressed do you feel about children being exposed to gambling ads while watching the game with their family? With 0 being "not distressed at all" to 10 being "extremely distressed".

76% voted 10/10

When you think about gambling in relation to AFL and NRL, what emotions come to mind?



How many times do you estimate that you would see a gambling ad during a game?



To add your voice to our campaigns visit: <https://www.agr.org.au/campaigns>

AFL Fans Association Survey

2924 AFL fans responded to the survey

Gambling ads has now surpassed umpiring/rule changes as the most common concern of AFL fans.

Gambling advertising should be banned from the AFL grounds. 79% Agree

Gambling advertising should be banned from broadcasting (including TV and radio) 76% Agree

AFL Clubs should not receive money from pokies revenue or gambling advertising 67% Agree

Gambling on AFL matches should not be allowed at the ground 65% Agree

Gambling on AFL matches should not be allowed online 44% Agree

The AFL should not receive any revenue from gambling (advertising, gambling revenue, other) 62% Agree

Qualitative comments contain the full spectrum of fan views on these topics and include:

- Particular concerns about the bombardment of gambling ads leading to young children being 'groomed' by the AFL to gamble. This is leading to a reluctance of some fans to attend matches with their children or allow them to watch matches (TV or streaming).
- Recognition of the significant social and family problems caused by gambling including the destruction of families.
- Questioning the AFL's values and morals through allowing gambling advertising and that support of gambling leads to integrity risks for the competition and potential corruption as demonstrated by the umpire Brownlow betting scandal.
- An appreciation that it is an individual's choice to choose whether to gamble.
- Questioning why Victoria football clubs accept pokie revenue when WA clubs are not sustained by such income.

Support the Alliance

The Alliance relies on the generosity, efforts and support of Australians to advocate to remove the harm that the gambling inflicts on the social and economic wellbeing of individuals, and Australia as a whole.

If you would like to give us a hand, we'd love you to get involved, any way you can.

Become a regular giver and sign up for a monthly donation, or send through a donation anytime - donations are tax deductible - donate [here](#).



Our partnership with Gathered Here enables supporters to create a free will and consider a life-changing legacy with a gift to the Alliance. You can sign up [here](#).



Sign up for our newsletter [here](#):
Support our campaigns by using our templates to write to your MP, or sign our petitions - you can find our latest campaigns [here](#).

Follow us on social media and like and share our posts.

[Facebook: @ReformGambling](#)
[LinkedIn: @reform-gambling](#)
[X \(Twitter\): @ReformGambling](#)

Talk to your friends, family and colleagues about gambling harm and tell them you support the Alliance for Gambling Reform!

Use language that puts the responsibility on the product and industry, not the individual being harmed - check out our language guide [here](#).

If you have lived experience of gambling harm, you can sign up for our Voices for Gambling Reform program [here](#).

Glossary

AEC – Australian Electoral Commission

ALGA – Australia Local Government Association the peak body for all Australian councils

ALH –The Australian Leisure and Hospitality Group hotel venue owner and operator

AUSTRAC – Australian Transaction Reports and Analysis Centre

ASIC – Australian Securities and Investments Commission

PAEC Inquiry - Public Accounts and Estimates Committee Inquiry into the Victorian Auditor-General's reports no. 99 Follow up of Regulating Gambling and Liquor (2019) and no. 213: Reducing the Harm Caused by Gambling (2021)

VGCCC – Victorian Gambling and Casino Control Commission

YourPlay – Victorian poker machine carded play system which allows user to set loss limits the system is voluntary for users but mandatory for venues



Policy and Advocacy Lead Rose O'Leary, CEO Carol Bennett and SA-BEST Member of Parliament Connie Bonaros MLC

Note: 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.

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.

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

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.

Binding and default limits – These are limits to losses that are pre-set. Default limits are maximum losses set by regulation. Binding limits stop the user from altering the limits.



Federal Ind. Senator David Pocock, Voices for Gambling Reform Manager Kate Seselja, CEO Carol Bennett, Federal Ind. MP Rebekah Sharkie, Federal Senator Jacqui Lambie and Federal Ind. MP Andrew Wilkie



ALLIANCE FOR GAMBLING REFORM

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