

POLICY FUTURES

A Reform Agenda



Universal Registration is Key to Preventing Gambling Harm.

Gambling is highly accessible and heavily promoted in Australia. Electronic gambling machines (EGMs) and online wagering are higher-risk products where the regulation of gambling has not kept pace with technological advances and new marketing strategies. Influence from the gambling industry, including through political donations, can create a barrier to meaningful action and reforms.

A system requiring people who gamble to establish a unique account would facilitate the introduction of important harm reduction tools, including binding limits on losses. By their nature, these systems do not affect those who gamble at no-risk levels. Pre-commitment systems for gambling have been introduced successfully internationally. These recommendations are informed by key learnings from Norway, Finland, Sweden, and Britain.

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Key Policy Recommendations

- 1** Prohibit political donations from gambling industry actors, to enable policymakers to introduce meaningful reforms.
- 2** Ensure that the National Anti-Corruption Commission can address undue influence on policymakers by harmful industries.
- 3** Establish a royal commission into gambling regulation in Australia, to enquire into the nature and extent of operator duty of care and practices, provide a platform for those affected by gambling, and document the ways in which product design influences harm.
- 4** Transition to a centralised, universal account registration system across Australia for wagering and EGMs. This would provide a platform for the deployment of a range of harm reduction measures, particularly a pre-commitment system with binding loss limits.
- 5** Prohibit predatory promotions and practices, including inducements to gamble. This should include a progressive reduction in gambling advertising, including during sport and on social media. This may require financial support to account for advertising revenue losses; it could be modelled for instance on the tobacco advertising ban, which saw tobacco advisements replaced with a QUIT tobacco campaign.

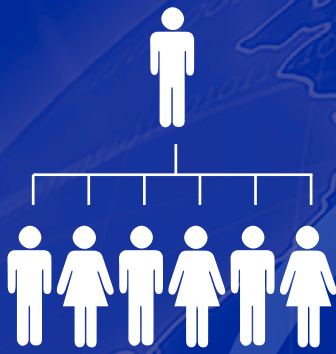
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Social costs



For every high risk gambler, six affected others are harmedⁱ



The Biggest Losers

Australians lose around \$25 billion on all forms of gambling each yearⁱⁱ

The equivalent of nearly \$1,200 per adult in Australia each year.



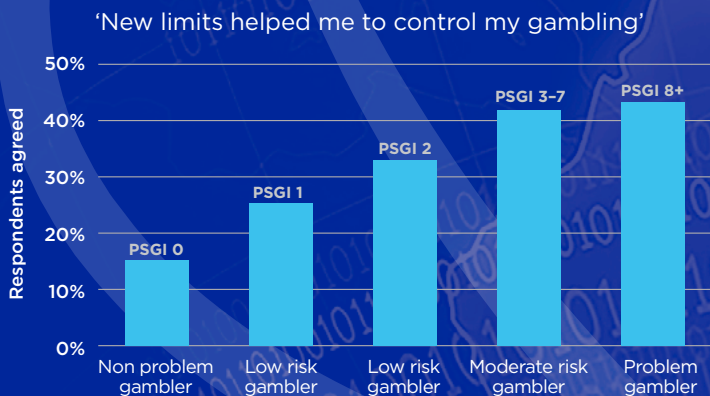
Gambling harm costs \$7 billion annually in Victoria aloneⁱⁱⁱ



Evidence abroad

In Australia, less than 1% of people who gamble on electronic gaming machines (EGMs) use an optional pre-commitment system.^{iv}

But centralised account registration can deliver full, universal pre-commitment systems for gambling^v ...



In Finland, almost half of all moderate and high risk gamblers agreed that 'new limits helped me to control my gambling.'^{vi}

In Norway, unprecedented reforms resulted in reduced participation in gambling, and a corresponding reduction in harm.^{vii}

ⁱ Goodwin, B, Browne, M, Rockloff, M, and Rose, J. 'A typical problem gambler affects six others.' *International Gambling Studies*, 17, 2 (2017), 276-289. ⁱⁱ Queensland Government Statistician's Office, Australian Gambling Statistics 1992-93 to 2017-18: 35th edition. Brisbane: Queensland Treasury, 2019. <https://www.qgso.qld.gov.au/issues/2646/australiangambling-statistics-35th-edn-1992-93-2017-18.pdf>. ⁱⁱⁱ Browne, M, Greer, N, Armstrong, T, Doran, C, Kinchin, I, Langham, E and Rockloff, M. The social cost of gambling to Victoria. Melbourne: Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation, 2017. ^{iv} Rintoul, A, and Thomas, A. Pre-commitment systems for electronic gambling machines. Preventing harm and improving consumer protection. Melbourne: Australian Gambling Research Centre, Australian Institute of Family Studies, 2017. ^v South Australian Centre for Economic Studies (SACES). Evaluation of YourPlay - Final report. South Australia: South Australian Centre for Economic Studies, 2019. ^{vi} Rinkinen, H. 'The Effects of Mandatory and Global Gaming Restrictions in Digital Gaming.' Veikkaus, 2019. ^{vii} Rintoul, A. Modernising harm prevention for gambling in Australia: International lessons for public health policy and improved regulation of gambling. Churchill Fellowship Report: The Winston Churchill Memorial Trust, 2019. <https://www.churchilltrust.com.au/project/toinvestigate-international-lessons-for-public-healthpolicy-and-improved-regulation-of-gambling/>