

**MINISTERIAL COUNCIL ON GAMBLING
PROGRESS REPORT TO COUNCIL OF AUSTRALIAN
GOVERNMENTS ON IMPLEMENTATION OF THE
NATIONAL FRAMEWORK ON PROBLEM GAMBLING 2004-2008
(NFPG)
December 2005**

CAVEAT:

This report represents a selected summary of major initiatives and achievements undertaken in Australian jurisdictions and references those against the four key focus areas of the NFPG.

This report was not prepared as a comprehensive review of the gambling policy activity of State and Territory Governments nor should it be assumed that it comprehensively describes the initiatives contained. Readers are encouraged to make direct contact with relevant State and Territory Governments to obtain a contemporary and complete understanding of relevant gambling policy initiatives.

It should be further noted that all State and Territory governments have taken action in areas that are directed at addressing problem gambling but which are not explicitly referenced in the NFPG.

Background

In November 2000, COAG agreed that the Ministerial Council on Gambling (MCG) would develop a national strategic framework, to be primarily implemented by State and Territory governments, around prevention, early intervention and continuing support, building effective partnerships and national research and evaluation.

The National Framework on Problem Gambling 2004-2008 (NFPG) was endorsed by the MCG on 2 July 2004. The NFPG has 4 key focus areas and objectives.

1. Public Awareness, Education and Training – to promote a greater understanding of the nature of the gambling product, the potential for harm and the availability of help and support.
2. Responsible Gambling Environments - to minimise the likelihood of recreational gamblers developing problem gambling behaviours.
3. Intervention, Counselling and Support Services - to enhance problem gambling support and treatment services that are effective, accessible and culturally appropriate.
4. National Research and Data Collection – to inform the development and further development of the national framework and its strategies

The NFPG outlines a range of strategies under each key focus area/objective. The strategies seek to minimise the negative consequences of problem gambling to the individual, their family and the community through a national

approach. The application of these strategies by jurisdictions is dependent on their relevance to local circumstances and conditions.

This is the first report by the Ministerial Council on Gambling on the implementation of the NFPG. The report consists of a summary of key achievements and initiatives occurring across the Australian, State and Territory Governments under each key focus area and strategy of the NFPG. Innovative jurisdictional initiatives are highlighted under each strategy. It also contains the following two appendices:

- **Appendix 1:** Summary of Australian, state and territory government research into responsible gambling
- **Appendix 2:** Highlights of activities against NFPG Key Focus Areas and strategies for each jurisdiction.

Summary of Key Achievements and Initiatives

The following is a summary of key achievements and initiatives occurring across Australian, State and Territory Governments within each key focus area. Innovative jurisdictional initiatives are highlighted as specific initiatives under each strategy.

1) Public Awareness, Education and Training – to promote a greater understanding of the nature of the gambling product, the potential for harm and the availability of help and support.

a) Build community awareness of problem gambling issues and services.

Main activities undertaken

- Several jurisdictions have developed and implemented media campaigns using television, radio and print advertising, to build community awareness of problem gambling issues and services.
 - Initiatives in Western Australia include a problem gambling community awareness campaign, which commenced in August 2005 and ran for six weeks. The campaign included bus and bus shelter advertising, radio advertisements and newspaper advertisements.
 - In South Australia, a media campaign involving television, radio and print – ‘Think of What You’re Really Gambling With’ - was undertaken during 2003-04 and included advertising in 11 languages (radio and press). The campaign recorded a level of 34 per cent in public awareness. Phase 2 of the campaign is planned for early 2006. In addition, a community information booklet was distributed with the Advertiser and Sunday Mail newspapers.
 - In 2003, in Tasmania, a Gambling Awareness Media Campaign was undertaken which targeted persons that gamble, those who know someone who gambles or those

who might be affected by another person's gambling. The campaign evaluation revealed an increase of 52 per cent in first time callers to the Gambling Helpline Tasmania and a significant increase in community identification of gambling support services.

- In Victoria, the communication element of the Problem Gambling Strategy included the 'Think of What You're Really Gambling With' media and community education campaign.
- The Australian Capital Territory conducted a multi-media problem gambling awareness and education campaign in 2002, to complement the introduction and implementation of its Code of Practice, and held a follow-up campaign in 2003.
- Queensland conducted a responsible gambling community awareness campaign from April to June 2005, targeting 18 to 34 year olds, which reinforced responsible gambling practices by recreational gamblers.
- Since November 2002, New South Wales has funded a multimedia problem gambling advertising campaign with the message "Unscrambling Problem Gambling". The campaign raised awareness of the assistance available to address problem gambling and encouraged the use of the state's G-Line telephone counselling and information service.
- All jurisdictions have developed a range of printed material such as fact sheets, posters, wallet cards and brochures, which are distributed in gaming venues and to the general community. These aim to educate gamblers and promote the support services that are available such as problem gambling helplines.
- A few jurisdictions have also developed problem gambling websites to educate and inform problem gamblers about the risks and to provide support.

Examples of specific initiatives

- The Australian Capital Territory has funded Lifeline and Care Inc, to assist *Oz Help* in developing the "Budgeting and Responsible Gambling Module" of its Lifeskills Program. *Oz Help* is a building and construction industry based charitable organisation that targets the LifeSkills Program to all apprentices and workers in the building and construction industry.
- South Australia has introduced a school-based gambling education program on the risks of gambling, and the impacts of gambling and problem gambling called "Dicey Dealings".

b) Ensure that education and awareness campaigns are cognisant of various populations within the community.

Main activities undertaken

- Several jurisdictions have conducted market research to inform the development of communication activities targeting Indigenous and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD)

communities, and all jurisdictions have developed public education material that is available in a variety of languages.

- Most states and territories have also developed specific communication products for CALD target audiences, such as an Indigenous-specific harm minimisation poster created in the Northern Territory.

Examples of specific initiatives

- Victoria has developed a CALD communications strategy that targets twelve key CALD communities. This will be launched shortly and comprises advertisements, public relations, community partnerships, and market research.

c) *Ensure gamblers have access to consumer information about the nature of gambling products, for example the chances of winning major prizes.*

Main activities undertaken

- Jurisdictional activities to educate gamblers about the products they use include fitting casino gaming machines, with player information displays (these provide detailed information about the game and its probabilities of winning) and printing the probabilities for winning on the reverse side of entry lottery coupons for games such as Lotto and Soccer Pools.
- To gain more information on the effectiveness of these and other strategies to educate gamblers, some jurisdictions have conducted evaluations. For example, Queensland has evaluated the effectiveness of player information displays in supporting consumers to make informed decisions.

Examples of specific initiatives

- Player guides have been developed and distributed in the Northern Territory, including for gaming machines, explaining how electronic gaming machines work, percentage return to the player and chances of winning. They also examine a number of gambling myths.
- The Burswood International Resort Casino in Western Australia provides player information brochures for all authorised games. These brochures are commonly known as *Know the Deal* and provide patrons with details of how gambling machines operate in a meaningful way.
- In New South Wales gaming machine venues, including the Sydney Casino, are required to display generalised chances of winning messages (ie “Your chance of winning the maximum prize on a gaming machine is generally no better than one in a million”).

- d) *Raise awareness of health and social welfare professionals about the benefits of early identification of problem gambling.*

Main activities undertaken

- Market research has been done in a few jurisdictions to help inform the development of information resources for the health and welfare sector, for use in workshops and forums.
- Other service sectors, such as financial counsellors, are being targeted to recognise the signs of problem gambling and be the first source of support to problem gamblers.

Examples of specific initiatives

- In Victoria, a Problem Gambling Health Professionals Kit is being developed to serve as a resource for health and welfare professionals who deal with problem gambling.
- The South Australian Gamblers Rehabilitation Fund is working in partnership with the AMA to produce a resource and gambling screen for Doctors. Community education grants were used to develop a manual for health workers conducting group work with problem gamblers.

- e) *Ensure that relevant gambling industry personnel receive appropriate training in the responsible conduct of gambling.*

Main activities undertaken

- To ensure gambling personnel are appropriately trained in their duties and responsibilities, all jurisdictions require training for licensed staff in gaming venues and conduct regular refresher courses.
- Several states and territories are also developing responsible gambling training packages, some of which include booklets and DVDs.
- In a few jurisdictions, a gambling incident register or database is maintained by gambling premises to assist venue personnel in tracking incidents that occur with patrons and documenting the information provided to patrons on counselling services available.
- Gambling by gaming staff, while on duty, is prohibited in most States and Territories.

Examples of specific initiatives

- A comprehensive on-line training module incorporating responsible gambling modules is being developed in Western Australia.

- f) *Ensure the availability of treatment and support services and venue based services, such as exclusions, are well publicised and promoted.*

Main activities undertaken

- All jurisdictions require that gambling venues develop and distribute (within venues and more broadly), written information regarding available gambling support services, such as gambling helplines and counselling services. In most jurisdictions, gambling helplines are promoted to the general community by community services and through a range of communication activities, including print and radio advertisements.
- Most jurisdictions also require that gaming venues have written patron exclusion procedures and keep a register of excluded persons. For many states and territories, this includes procedures such as the removal of the names of barred patrons from loyalty mailing lists.
- A few jurisdictions have personnel serving as contact officers in venues, who provide support to problem gamblers.

Examples of specific initiatives

- In the Australian Capital Territory, industry and service providers are working together to assist problem gamblers eg Clubcare, which is a partnership between Lifeline and 20 gaming venues.

2) Responsible Gambling Environments - to minimise the likelihood of recreational gamblers developing problem gambling behaviours.

- a) *Consider any impacts on the community when assessing major expansions of gambling opportunities or the introduction of significant new gambling opportunities.*

Main activities undertaken

- Jurisdictions have made efforts to consider the impact of gambling on the community when implementing new measures or proposals.
 - All jurisdictions implementing a cap on machine numbers in venues; and
 - The majority of jurisdictions conduct a mandatory community impact analysis or social impact assessment with any new gaming proposal (eg new gaming machine licenses, new games, new machines). In Tasmania, there is a legislative requirement to conduct an independent review of the social and economic impact of all forms of gambling every three years.

Examples of specific initiatives

- The independent review by the Australian Government of the *Interactive Gambling Act (IGA) 2001*. The IGA review found that there is no evidence that people who gamble over the Internet are more likely to become problem gamblers; or that betting exchanges contribute to problem gambling. The review also considered that there is potential for enhanced consumer protection measures to be introduced in an online environment.
- A review panel of three current Members of Parliament in Victoria undertook extensive community consultation around the issue of capping gaming machine numbers.

b) Further develop and implement Codes of Practice and/or regulatory frameworks to promote responsible practices by operators, and informed decision making by consumers.

Main activities undertaken

- Under this strategy, several jurisdictions are conducting reviews of their current codes of practice, to assess the impacts of the Codes on the community and their effectiveness in promoting responsible gambling practices.

Examples of specific initiatives:

- In July 2003, New South Wales commissioned the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal to conduct a wide ranging review of the effectiveness of various existing and proposed measures designed to minimise gambling related harm. The review found a need for a more integrated policy framework regarding problem gambling, with the aim of developing policy, programs and a regulatory system that promotes a culture of responsible gambling.
- Codes of practice for responsible gambling have been developed by Burswood International Resort Casino in Western Australia. Racing and Wagering Western Australia has developed a code of practice for responsible gambling for use in its TAB wagering operations.
- In December 2002, the Australian Capital Territory legislated a mandatory Code of Practice applicable to all gambling providers in the Territory. The mandatory Code of Practice requires multi-level venue based interventions for gamblers. In particular, all gambling venue licensees must nominate and specially train a Gambling Contact Officer (GCO) to work with gambling venue staff members and customers exhibiting signs of a gambling problem to facilitate discussion of the possible problem and advise about counselling and support services.
- Monthly self-assessment checklists for gaming machine venues have been implemented, from 1 July 2005, in Queensland. This

checklist includes self-assessment of adherence to various legislated responsible gambling practices, including matters related to the gaming environment, signage and exclusion provisions.

- c) *Encourage availability of appropriate venue based interventions for gamblers.*

Main activities undertaken

- Key activities to encourage venue-based interventions include development and implementation of gambling exclusion schemes, including self-exclusion across all jurisdictions, and requirements in some states and territories for nomination of a gambling contact or liaison officer in gaming venues. These officers intervene with customers demonstrating signs of problem gambling.
- Several jurisdictions have banned gambling by intoxicated persons and some states and territories have held consultations, such as industry and community network forums, on how to create responsible gaming environments.

Examples of specific initiatives

- A legislated exclusions regime for people experiencing problems controlling their gambling behaviour commenced in Queensland on 1 May 2005. The regime is unique in Australia, due to its development by a tripartite working group involving community, industry and government representatives. Under the regime, gambling providers can exclude a patron at the patron's request and/or the gambling provider can initiate a venue-based exclusion.
- In December 2004, the SkyCity Adelaide Casino (South Australia) introduced its Host Responsibility Coordinator Initiative, under which dedicated staff are available to identify and assist customers at risk of problem gambling, as well as assist those customers and their families at all times the Casino is open.

- d) *Further develop and implement Codes of Practice and/or regulatory frameworks that ensure advertising and promotions do not encourage problem gambling.*

Main activities undertaken

- All jurisdictions have developed restrictions around advertising to help ensure it does not encourage problem gambling. In many jurisdictions, guides have been developed to provide assistance to venues on how to ensure advertising and promotions do not encourage problem gambling.

- All jurisdictions regularly monitor adherence to relevant legislation. In some cases, publishing of gaming machine advertising outside the gaming machine area of an approved venue or the boundaries of a casino is prohibited.

Examples of specific initiatives

- In the Northern Territory and South Australia, advertising of gambling activities cannot be directed at minors or vulnerable or disadvantaged groups.
- e) *Develop strategies to enable gamblers to limit their expenditure or time spent gambling, for example through pre-commitment measures and appropriate controls over financial transactions.*

Main activities undertaken

- Several jurisdictions require the compulsory shutdown of venues for minimum periods of time per 24 hours. In some states and territories this period of time is 4 hours per day, while in others it is 6 hours per day.
- Several jurisdictions require venues to have visible clocks and natural daylight to mark the passage of time for patrons.
- A number of jurisdictions have set limits on the number of EFTPOS transactions permitted per day. Many jurisdictions also require that ATMs be placed outside the gaming areas of venues. Some jurisdictions have note acceptors with limits and place restrictions on winnings paid as cash, requiring that the balance be paid as a cheque.

Examples of specific initiatives

- The MCG has been progressing the development of a national approach to risks associated with access to cash in and around gambling venues. This has included investigation of the evidence base that informs regulation of access to cash, collation of information on current approaches to regulating access to cash in States and Territories, and discussions with the financial services industry to facilitate the sharing of views and discussion of relevant issues such as feasibility and costs. In October 2005, the MCG agreed to explore the development of a code of practice/s (or industry standard/s) regarding ATM and EFTPOS withdrawals in and around gambling venues.
- The GRA funded the *Analysis of Gamblers Pre-commitment Behaviour* project. The project is entering its second phase.
 - The first phase – a qualitative report – has been completed and incorporates a literature review, a scan of national and international practices relevant to pre-commitment and

interviews with gamblers and industry stakeholders on pre-commitment issues.

- The second phase will be a separate project and will investigate aspects of gambling activity based on findings from Phase 1.
- In Queensland, a consumer pre-commitment trial based on card-based gaming and limit setting was conducted. The trial involved the option for electronic gaming machine (EGM) players to set limits on the money or time they spent on play and examined the effectiveness of pre-commitment/card-based gaming at a gaming venue, from both the player's and venue's perspectives.
- In South Australia, an inquiry was held into how smartcard technology might be implemented with a view to significantly reducing problem gambling.
- In New South Wales, all new electronic gaming machines are required to display both the number and dollar value of credits wagered and won on the machine

3) Intervention, Counselling and Support Services - to enhance problem gambling support and treatment services that are effective, accessible and culturally appropriate.

- a) *Maintain a problem gambling support and treatment system, which is available generally, including across regional, rural and remote locations.*

Main activities undertaken

- All jurisdictions provide a gambling helpline for telephone counselling and have developed relationships with key service providers to share information.
- In some jurisdictions, non-government agencies that provide a range of therapeutic and financial counselling services have been offered long term funding contracts to continue their work.

Examples of specific initiatives

- In Tasmania, the Department of Treasury and Finance's Liquor and Gaming Branch is liaising with the Tasmanian police to ensure there is a strategic, consistent and integrated approach to interventions. It is also evaluating the effectiveness of current programs.
- The New South Wales Policy Framework on Treatment Services, which details a five-year strategic plan to guide the development of treatment services, is currently being implemented, in partnership with the counselling sector.

- b) *Ensure services are effective for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) populations and indigenous people.*

Main activities undertaken

- Some jurisdictions provide interpreter services on their gambling help-lines, and all jurisdictions have developed problem gambling information material that is available in a variety of languages.
- In some states and territories, research has been conducted to identify the needs of CALD populations and models of intervention have been developed and trialled.

Examples of specific initiatives

- Specific research in Queensland has been conducted exploring the efficacy of a cognitive behavioural therapy program among problem gamblers in the Chinese population.

c) *Introduce standardised problem gambling assessment tools for use by counsellors and community workers.*

Main activities undertaken

- All jurisdictions have indicated an interest in participating in the national development of problem gambling assessment tools.
- In several jurisdictions, the Diagnostic and Statistical Measure of Mental Disorders (DSM IV) and the South Oakes Gambling Screen are being used for assessment of problem gamblers by gambling counselling services.
- Jurisdictions are using the Canadian Problem Gambling Index for population based research, as recommended by the Gambling Research Australia report – Problem Gambling and harm: Towards a National Definition

Examples of specific initiatives

- In South Australia, pre- and post-measure testing has been required by services since January 2004, including depression scales and outcome measures for assessing gambling behaviours.

d) *Ensure counsellors and community workers in problem gambling services have appropriate training.*

Main activities undertaken

- All jurisdictions require gambling counsellors to be professionally trained, and several are conducting evaluations of current support programs, to ensure their relevance and appropriateness.

Examples of specific initiatives

- In Queensland, staff have access to free professional training through the Integrated Skills Development Strategy.
 - One of the key education and training strategies within the New South Wales Policy Framework on Treatment Services is the development of a minimum qualification for counsellors working in the problem gambling treatment sector. The proposed minimum qualification will be set at Diploma level.
- e) *Develop national standards for problem gambling treatment and support services.*

Main activities undertaken

- Jurisdictions have agreed to work together to consider issues in relation to development of a National Minimum Data Set (NMDS) for gambling support, intervention and treatment services. The NMDS is one tool that would assist with building the evidence base on which responses to problem gambling can be based.

Examples of specific initiatives

- Insolvency and Trustee Services Australia (ITSA) has published a statement of its referral policy regarding criminal sanctions for gamblers, under the *Bankruptcy Act 1966*. Related initiatives include development of a standard script for financial counsellors for use with clients declared bankrupt due to problem gambling and establishment of a formal liaison process to provide financial counsellors with advice about complex clients.

4) National Research and Data Collection – to inform the development and further development of the national framework and its strategies

- a) *Implement and further develop the National Gambling Research Program which is jointly funded by all jurisdictions, to increase understanding of the nature and extent of problem gambling and effective intervention strategies in Australia and provide for a clearing-house for gambling research.*

Main activities undertaken

- The MOU for the NGRP was agreed by all States and Territories in October 2003. The program has received \$960,000 in annual funding from the Australian, state and territory governments for each of the three years of operation – 2003/04, 2004/05 and 2005/06 (in total \$2.88 million). The Victorian Government provides its contribution by funding the secretariat function and support for the clearinghouse

website, at a cost of \$200,000 per annum. Approximately \$206,000 has been spent on two research projects at December 2005, one of which has been completed. There has been a focus on development of peer review and assessment processes and collation of individual jurisdiction research activities to limit duplication at the national level. The GRA regularly hosts meetings with the Regulators Responsible Gambling Working Party and the Community and Disability Services Ministers Advisory Conference Gambling Working Party, to broaden the research agenda.

- In the first half of 2005, a strategic review of national gambling related research was conducted at the request of MCG Ministers. The review report, the *Strategic Review of National Responsible Gambling Research Activities* (August 2005), identified key areas for strengthening the national research effort. The MCG agreed, at its 7 October 2005 meeting, that it would change the name of the National Gambling Research Program to Gambling Research Australia and would consider an implementation plan to strengthen the national research effort at its next meeting (August/September 2006).
- The Australian, State and Territory Governments are sponsoring a wide range of research. This includes evaluation of current programs and services and prevalence studies.

Examples of specific initiatives

- A specific centre of research has been established in the Australian Capital Territory – the Australian National University Centre for Gambling Research.
- A Responsible Gambling Research Grants Program has been established in Queensland.