

Ministerial Council on Gambling (MCG) Membership

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Minister for Gaming and Racing, and
Minister for the Central Coast
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Minister for Tourism, and Minister
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for Sport
- South Australia:** **The Hon Michael Wright MP**
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Minister for Industrial Relations, Minister
for Recreation, Sport and Racing, and
Minister for Gambling
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Youth, Peel and the South-West
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Education and Training, and Minister for
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for Racing and Gaming
- Norfolk Island:** **The Hon Geoffrey Gardner MLA**
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- Community and Disability
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Conference:** **The Hon Jay Weatherill MP**
Minister for Families and Communities,
Minister for Housing, Minister for Ageing,
and Minister for Disability

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NATIONAL FRAMEWORK ON PROBLEM GAMBLING

2004-2008

The aim of the Framework is to minimise the negative consequences of problem gambling to the individual, their family and the community through a national approach.

A joint initiative of the Australian Government and State and Territory governments through the Ministerial Council on Gambling

Background

For many people gambling is a legitimate part of their leisure and recreation activities. While most people who gamble do so in a responsible manner and enjoy gambling as entertainment, for some it is a cause of problems for themselves, their families and the community.

The Productivity Commission report, *Australia's Gambling Industries* (1999), found that levels of problem gambling are of major concern. According to the report, around 330,000 (2.3 per cent) adult Australians have significant gambling problems, and for every one of these an additional 5 to 10 people are adversely affected in a direct way by their gambling. More recent surveys in a number of States and Territories have indicated that problem gambling remains a significant community issue.

The challenge for all governments in Australia is to find a response that balances the legitimate opportunity for individual Australians to gamble if they wish, with the ongoing responsibility of governments for overall community welfare.

States and Territories have taken significant steps to address problem gambling and the Council of Australian Governments agreed that preventing and addressing the negative consequences from problem gambling are the joint responsibilities of all governments, the gambling industry, communities and individuals. In addition, it agreed that the Ministerial Council on Gambling develop a national 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.

This framework will support further work in reducing the negative social impacts of gambling. Implementation of the strategies described in this framework will help the Australian, State and Territory government initiatives, and achieve the balance between maximising the benefits and minimising the potential harm of gambling to the community.

Developments in technology are having an impact on gambling consumer behaviour. Ongoing development of the national framework provides an opportunity to address newer technologies and their impact on gambling behaviour.

Principles

The national framework on problem gambling is built upon the following principles:

- The community has a right to accurate and balanced information on gambling, on the risks associated with gambling, and on available support services.
- Gamblers, the gambling industry, the community, support service providers, Australian, State and Territory governments all share the responsibility for minimising the harm associated with problem gambling.
- While State and Territory governments are responsible for ensuring regulatory frameworks minimise problem gambling, harm minimisation measures can be enhanced when developed and implemented through collaborative partnerships that build on current best practice.
- Research and evaluation are essential to ensure that initiatives are likely to minimise problem gambling without unintended negative consequences for the community.

Key Focus Areas, Objectives and Strategies

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.

- Build community awareness of problem gambling issues and services.
- Ensure that education and awareness campaigns are cognisant of the various populations within the community.
- Ensure gamblers have access to consumer information about the nature of gambling products, for example on the chances of winning major prizes.
- Raise awareness of health and social welfare professionals, about the benefits of early identification of problem gambling.
- Ensure that relevant gambling industry personnel receive appropriate training in the responsible conduct of gambling.
- Ensure the availability of treatment and support services and venue-based services such as exclusions are well publicised and promoted.

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

- Consider any impacts on the community when assessing major expansions of gambling opportunities or the introduction of significant new gambling opportunities.
- Further develop and implement Codes of Practice and/or regulatory frameworks to promote responsible practices by operators, and informed decision making by consumers.
- Encourage availability of appropriate venue-based interventions for gamblers.
- Further develop and implement Codes of Practice and/or regulatory frameworks that ensure advertising and promotions do not encourage problem gambling.
- 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.

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

- Maintain a problem gambling support and treatment system, which is available generally, including across regional, rural and remote locations.
- Ensure services are effective for culturally and linguistically diverse populations and Indigenous people.
- Introduce standardised problem gambling assessment tools for use by counsellors and community workers.
- Ensure counsellors and community workers in problem gambling services have appropriate training.
- Develop national standards for problem gambling treatment and support services.

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

- 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 a clearinghouse for gambling research.
- The priority research areas for the National Gambling Research Program are the following six areas:
 1. National approach to definitions of problem gambling and consistent data collection.
 2. Feasibility and consequences of changes to gaming machine operation such as pre-commitment of loss limits, phasing out note-acceptors, imposition of mandatory breaks in play and the impact of linked jackpots.
 3. Best approaches to early intervention and prevention to avoid problem gambling.
 4. Major study of problem gamblers, including their profile, attitudes, gambling behaviour and the impact of proposed policy measures on them.
 5. Benchmarks and on-going monitoring studies to measure the impact and effectiveness of strategies introduced to reduce the extent and impact of problem gambling, including studies of services that exist to assist problem gamblers and how effective these services are.
 6. To research patterns of gambling and consider strategies for harm reduction in specific communities and populations, such as Indigenous, rural, remote or culturally and linguistically diverse communities, young people or older people.