



**Australian Government**

Australian Government response to the House of  
Representatives Standing Committee on Social  
Policy and Legal Affairs Inquiry report:

You win some, you lose more: Online gambling and its  
impacts on those experiencing gambling harm

May 2026

## Acknowledgement of Country

The Australian Government acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples throughout Australia and their continuing connection to land, water, culture and community, and pay our respects to Elders past and present.

## Help and support

Support is available for people experiencing gambling harm.

### Gambling Help Online

For free and confidential support visit Gambling Help Online at [www.gamblinghelponline.org.au](http://www.gamblinghelponline.org.au) to find out more about online counselling, live chat and email support, self-help advice and information. This support is available to anyone experiencing harm and anyone concerned about a friend or family member.

### Telephone support

You can get immediate assistance by calling the National Gambling Helpline on **1800 858 858** for free, professional and confidential support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

### Financial counselling

Financial counselling is available to support people affected by gambling harm. Visit the Department of Social Services' webpage [www.dss.gov.au/financialcounselling](http://www.dss.gov.au/financialcounselling) for more information.

### BetStop - the National Self-Exclusion Register

BetStop - the National Self-Exclusion Register lets you exclude yourself from all Australian licensed online and phone wagering services in a single step for a minimum of 3 months and up to a lifetime.

Registering is quick and easy. All you need is a mobile phone number, email address and an Australian driver's licence, a Medicare card or a passport.

The service is free, and your personal details will be protected.

Visit [www.betstop.gov.au](http://www.betstop.gov.au) for more information.

## Introduction

The Australian Government takes its responsibility to protect Australians from online gambling harm seriously.

The Government welcomes the report of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs (the Committee) *Inquiry into online gambling and its impacts on those experiencing gambling harm* (the Online Gambling Inquiry).

The Online Gambling Inquiry was established following a referral by then Minister for Social Services, the Hon Amanda Rishworth MP. The Committee, chaired by the late Ms Peta Murphy MP, examined whether current laws, regulations, consumer protections, education and support programs are sufficient at reducing online gambling harm.

The Government thanks the Committee members for their dedication and professionalism throughout the Inquiry and acknowledges the late Peta Murphy's courageous and tireless advocacy to reduce online gambling harm, including in her capacity as chair of the Committee.

The Committee received 161 submissions, 26 exhibits and held 13 public hearings. The Government acknowledges all those who took the time to make a submission or appeared before the Committee as witnesses. In particular, we recognise those people with the lived experience of gambling harm for sharing their personal experiences with the Committee and supporting its work.

Based on this evidence and testimony, the Committee's report highlighted the substantial harm that online gambling can cause to individuals and families and made 31 wide-ranging recommendations to address online gambling harms.

Gambling harm is a significant public health concern. Queensland Treasury data shows that Australians lost over \$32 billion on legal forms of gambling in 2023-24, representing the highest losses per capita in the world of around \$1,521 per adult. Research by the Australian Institute of Family Studies found that in 2024, 15 per cent of Australian adults were experiencing or at risk of experiencing gambling harm.

The impact of gambling harm is felt throughout the community, where for every individual at high risk of gambling harm, up to 6 other individuals can be affected.<sup>1</sup> Gambling harm can span many aspects of an individual's life, including finances, relationships, emotional and psychological issues, physical health, work and study performance. Research commissioned by the Victorian Government estimates the social cost of gambling in Victoria was \$14.1 billion in 2023 alone, comprising adverse financial, emotional and psychological costs, relationship and family impacts, and productivity loss.

The Government is taking strong action to protect Australians, particularly children and young people, from the harms of online gambling. On 2 April 2026, the Government announced a package of measures that address key themes of the Committee's report and set the Government's forward agenda to reduce online gambling harms in Australia. The details of these measures are outlined in this response. These strong actions build on the work the Government has already delivered, including key measures implemented in partnership with the states and territories to reduce online gambling harms through the National Consumer Protection Framework for Online Wagering (the National Framework).

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<sup>1</sup> Goodwin, B. C., Browne, M., Rockloff, M., & Rose, J. (2017). A typical problem gambler affects six others. *International Gambling Studies*, 17(2), 276–289.

## Australian Government response

The Government notes the 31 recommendations made by the Committee. The Government announced a package of gambling reforms on 2 April 2026, to better protect Australians from the harms of online gambling. These reforms were informed by the work of the Committee and a number of these measures also build on what was proposed in the Online Gambling Inquiry report, in response to new and emerging challenges.

A number of recommendations made by the committee relate to policy within the responsibility of States and Territories. The Australian Government calls on States and Territories to examine the recommendations of the committee and respond accordingly.

The Government's package includes:

- restricting wagering advertising
- boosting enforcement action against illegal online gambling services
- strengthening the operation of BetStop – the National Self-Exclusion Register (BetStop)
- addressing harmful and emerging online lottery products
- doubling financial counselling support for gambling, and
- increasing public awareness of online gambling harms targeted to those most at risk.

The Government will also make match-fixing criminal offences consistent across Australia, improving the integrity of Australian sport and lessening its appeal as a target for criminal infiltration.

The Government will develop legislation to implement these measures where required, with the reforms to begin from 1 January 2027. Further details will be refined through the legislative drafting process, which will include consultation with relevant stakeholders.

These reforms build on the significant measures already delivered to reduce online gambling harms, including: introducing new evidence-based taglines in March 2023; launching BetStop in August 2023; banning the use of credit cards and other credit-related products for online wagering in June 2024, and introducing mandatory minimum classifications for gambling-like content, including loot boxes and simulated gambling in computer games in September 2024.

### Restricting wagering advertising

The Government acknowledges the widespread concern across the Australian community about the volume of, and harm associated with, wagering advertisements on television, radio, online and outdoor platforms.

The Government is taking action to address the prevalence and saturation of wagering advertising, with a focus on minimising the dangers of exposing children and vulnerable people to wagering advertisements. The Government's reforms represent a balanced approach while targeting key community concerns around the proliferation of wagering advertising. These reforms will:

- address the saturation and targeting of wagering advertising
- break the link between sports and online wagering, and
- protect children and vulnerable people from the harms of wagering advertising.

The Government's comprehensive package of wagering advertising reforms will:

- ban all wagering advertising during live sporting events on broadcast channels between 6:00am and 8:30pm
- ban all wagering advertising in sports venues and on players' and officials' uniforms
- restrict all wagering advertising on broadcast television to no more than 3 wagering advertisements per hour per channel between 6:00am and 8:30pm
- ban all wagering advertising on broadcast radio during school drop-off (8:00-9:00am) and pick-up (3:00-4:00pm) hours
- ban all wagering advertising on online platforms, except where users are logged in, are 18 years or older, and have not opted out of such advertising (triple lock functionality), and
- ban the use of notable people (including celebrities and athletes) and the promotion of odds in wagering advertising.

Consistent with the Online Gambling Inquiry, dedicated racing channels, programs, and racetracks (e.g. racing.com, racing programs and telecasts) will be exempt from the proposed reforms in recognition of the intrinsic link between racing and wagering activities. Dedicated betting websites and venues (e.g. TAB outlets) will also be exempt.

These reforms will be implemented through legislative amendment to the *Interactive Gambling Act 2001* (IGA) and will commence from 1 January 2027. This approach will provide strong legislative backing for the new restrictions and strong penalties for non-compliance.

The Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) will be responsible for enforcing compliance with these restrictions.

## Boosting enforcement action against illegal online gambling services

The Government acknowledges that illegal online gambling services present a risk to the community, as they are unlikely to have consumer protections, pay no Australian taxes, racing or sports fees, and can be used for money laundering or match fixing purposes. The illegal offshore gambling market in Australia is growing faster than the licenced and regulated onshore market and is expected to be valued at \$5 billion by 2029.

The IGA prohibits the provision and advertising of illegal online gambling services to Australians, including offshore wagering services. Strong penalties apply for the provision of these services to persons located in Australia.

The ACMA already has the tools to block these websites from operating and has blocked over 1,500 sites since this work commenced. However, the regulatory requirements are onerous and prohibit the ACMA from being able to investigate and respond rapidly.

The Government will boost enforcement against illegal online gambling services to stop these sites from operating within Australia, but outside of Australia's laws and consumer protections.

To do this, the Government will:

- work with Australia's banking sector to enable them to block financial transactions between Australian bank accounts and illegal gambling operators
- streamline, automate and extend the scope of the ACMA's website blocking scheme to include additional internet service providers and alternate domain name system providers, and
- extend the scope of the existing ban on advertising illegal online gambling services to capture social media sites and require hosting services and digital platforms to take down illegal content.

These measures seek to reduce the adverse effects of illegal online gambling on Australians, noting illegal gambling operators are unregulated and operate outside of Australian consumer protection mechanisms, including BetStop, mandatory customer pre-verification and the credit card payment ban.

These additional disruptions are also intended to deter potential illegal operators from entering the Australian market, leading to a reduction in illegal gambling activities over the long-term.

## Strengthening the operation of BetStop

BetStop allows Australians to self-exclude from all Australian licensed online and phone wagering providers, who primarily offer online sports and race betting services, for a minimum period of 3 months, up to a lifetime. Between launching in August 2023 and April 2026, over 60,000 Australians had registered to self-exclude and there were over 37,000 active registrations.

The IGA required a review of BetStop after 12 months of operation and the Government tabled the final report of the Statutory Review of BetStop (the Review) on 25 February 2026.

The Review found that BetStop is a successful policy and is delivering well on its objectives. It identified several areas where changes could optimise BetStop's role in addressing gambling harm.

The Government will take action to strengthen BetStop in line with the outcomes of the Review.

This will include increasing promotion of BetStop to support increased take up of the service, through an advertising campaign and phased funding for the ACMA to increase its ongoing marketing, promotion and education efforts after the campaign concludes.

The Government will also commission market research to investigate the feasibility and options for embedding BetStop in existing gambling taglines and call to action messages, which wagering providers are required to include alongside their advertisements (e.g. *'Chances are you're about to lose - For free and confidential support call 1800 858 858 or visit [gamblinghelponline.org.au](https://gamblinghelponline.org.au)'*).

In line with review recommendations, several amendments to the IGA will be progressed to enhance clarity and improve user experience and safety outcomes. The ACMA will also progress necessary system updates and increase compliance efforts to strengthen BetStop.

Legislative amendments to cost recovery arrangements will also be progressed to ensure that all measures to strengthen the system will be cost-recovered from industry.

The Government will consult with states, territories and other stakeholders ahead of implementing legislative changes.

## Addressing harmful and emerging online lottery products

New online gambling and lottery products are being offered and promoted to Australian consumers that are contrary to the intent and spirit of the IGA, with some products now operating in a 'grey' regulatory space, without appropriate consumer protection mechanisms in place.

### Online keno

Online keno services have evolved from traditional keno and are now offered as a highly repetitive, rapid play gambling product, with high spend limits and high frequency 'draws', with some offerings allowing consumers to spend up to \$1,000 every 3 minutes.

Online keno is being marketed aggressively, with the advertising spend almost doubling between 2023 and 2024. This product has also been exempted from consumer protection measures implemented in recent years, including the credit card ban and BetStop. It is also exempt from gambling advertising rules.

Recognising this as a significant danger to the Australian community, the Government will ban all online keno, including for current operators. This change is consistent with the intent of the IGA to limit online gambling products that can lead to harmful gambling and will ensure consistent treatment of this product with online casino games, including online poker machines and online poker, which are also banned under the IGA.

The Government will consult with states, territories and industry ahead of implementing legislative changes to ban online keno.

#### Foreign-matched lotteries

Foreign-matched lotteries are an emerging product which allow consumers to access international multi-million dollar lottery draws multiple times a week, when they would otherwise be ineligible to do so. Foreign-matched lotteries are an 'excluded lottery service' in the IGA, and as a result are exempt from existing consumer protection mechanisms.

The Government will undertake consultation with states, territories and industry to scope and implement legislative changes that enhance protections against foreign-matched lotteries.

#### Trade promotion lotteries

Many organisations in Australia offer 'rewards club' or loyalty programs. However, there are emerging concerns that some rewards club operators are exploiting regulatory gaps to offer lottery products under the guise of 'trade promotions'. These 'shadow lottery products' involve operators selling memberships at a monthly fee and are structured around frequent prize giveaways via lottery-style draws. Prizes typically include items of high value such as cars, houses or significant sums of money.

While defined in the IGA, trade promotion gambling services are unregulated at the Commonwealth level. Again, this means that consumer protections established under the IGA do not apply to these services.

The Government will work with states and territories to examine the exemptions currently afforded to rewards club activities and introduce regulatory changes to support national regulation of these products, including to ensure there are appropriate consumer protections. This will include explicit definitions for a lottery product.

## Credit card ban

To strengthen protections against online gambling harms for vulnerable Australians, in June 2024 the Government legislated a ban on the use of credit cards, credit-related products (such as digital wallets) and digital currency (such as cryptocurrency) as payment methods for online wagering. This change has aligned online wagering with land-based gambling regulations, where credit card use was already banned.

The Minister for Communications is also able to make legislative instruments to extend this ban to new types of credit products that may be introduced to the market over time. This will enable an expedient response to address problematic payment methods that may become available in the future.

A statutory review of the credit card ban is due to commence in June 2026 and will consider the effectiveness of the ban since its implementation, and ensure the ban is operating as intended.

## Expanding financial counselling support for gambling

Financial counselling services are seeing the increasingly complex and far-reaching impacts of gambling harm. The Government recognises there is a need for more investment in prevention and early intervention programs alongside the upskilling of qualified staff to increase the availability of specialist services.

To further support those who are experiencing gambling harm, the Government will expand the reach and availability of Commonwealth-funded financial counselling services under the Financial Counselling for Gambling program. This program provides specialised financial counselling services for people who are experiencing financial hardship as a result of gambling harm, and supports them to make informed choices and build long-term financial capability. This expansion will increase the accessibility of services, including in new locations, doubling the number of people already supported through this program each year.

Funding for targeted community education initiatives will also increase awareness of gambling harm, from any form of gambling, and seek to build workforce capability through scholarships and training to support the longer-term sustainability of the financial counselling workforce, including specialist gambling financial counsellors.

## Increasing public awareness of online gambling harms

Evidence shows the number of Australians at risk of gambling harm is increasing and a lack of awareness and stigma are barriers to help-seeking.

The Government recognises that increasing awareness of the harms of online gambling, alongside improved access to support, can strengthen harm-minimisation efforts nationwide.

A national online gambling digital public awareness and education campaign will help drive greater understanding of the risks and harms of online gambling and seek to counter the harmful messages of gambling advertising.

The Government will fund a national online gambling public awareness and education campaign, informed by research and focused primarily on those at greatest risk, which are anticipated to be young men (aged 18-34), First Nations and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse communities. The campaign will communicate the risks and harms of gambling, encourage safer gambling behaviours, promote help-seeking and reduce stigma associated with gambling harm.

## Making match-fixing criminal offences consistent across Australia

Illegal offshore gambling sites do not participate in Australia's sporting integrity arrangements, raising further risks of match fixing and competition manipulation.

The Government will progress work to define match fixing as an offence under the Commonwealth Criminal Code, consistent with our commitment under the Council of Europe Convention on the Manipulation of Sports Competitions (Macolin Convention).

This change will provide the Government with the power to investigate and prosecute the corrupt manipulation of Australian sporting competitions.

In addition to direct benefits for the integrity of domestic sporting competitions, these changes have the potential to reduce gambling harm through hardening of sport as a target for criminal infiltration.

## Mandatory minimum classifications for gambling-like content

On 23 September 2023, the Government announced the introduction of new mandatory minimum classifications for computer games containing gambling-like content, in particular simulated gambling or paid loot boxes. These changes aim to protect children and young people from potential harms associated with exposure to gambling-like content.

The new mandatory minimum classifications came into force in September 2024 and introduced a classification of:

- R18+ (Restricted) for games with 'simulated gambling', which legally restricts access to persons aged 18 and over, aligning with age restrictions for real-world gambling, and
- M (Mature) rating for games containing 'loot boxes' that can be purchased, which highlights the risks that parents and carers should consider before allowing children in their care to engage with them.

All games classified after 22 September 2024 that contain simulated gambling are also required to display consumer advice of 'high impact simulated gambling'.

In addition, the Classification Board has updated their consumer advice so that games that contain paid loot boxes and other in-game purchases linked to elements of chance will display consumer advice of 'chance-based in-game purchases'.