

NSW Office of Responsible Gambling Strategic Plan 2024–2027

GambleAware
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A message from the Minister

As the Minister for Gaming and Racing, I am proud to present the Office of Responsible Gambling's Strategic Plan 2024-27. The plan will support this Government's efforts to prevent and minimise gambling harm in NSW while supporting vibrant, safe, and responsible hospitality and racing sectors.



The NSW Government is committed to gambling reform to reduce gambling harm in our community. As part of this commitment, in 2023 the NSW Government established an independent panel of experts to oversee a cashless gaming trial in pubs and clubs across NSW and provide a gaming reform implementation roadmap for the state. The cashless gaming trial builds on a suite of reforms, including:

- banning all external gambling signage in venues
- forbidding political donations from clubs with electronic gaming machines
- strengthening harm minimisation requirements at venues with gaming machines, such as introducing Responsible Gambling Officers, gambling incident registers and gaming plans of management.

These reforms recognise we all have a role to play in preventing and reducing gambling harm, and encourage everyone in our community to be aware of our gambling and the impact that can have on others.

In the 2024/25 Budget, the NSW Government committed an additional \$10 million to the Responsible Gambling Fund for the Office of Responsible Gambling to develop and deliver harm minimisation initiatives – a vital part of our commitment to reducing harm from gambling for individuals, their families and their communities.

This Strategic Plan 2024-27 provides a framework through which the Office will deliver its work over the next three years.

This includes not only support for those who may be experiencing gambling harm, but also a range of programs and initiatives to prevent and reduce gambling harm.

The plan builds on the Office's already significant achievements in research, education, awareness raising, leadership, intervention, support and treatment. It also brings a new focus to current and emerging issues, and highlights particular priority populations for further engagement and support, including Aboriginal communities, culturally and linguistically diverse communities, young people, and veterans.

We will continue to work in partnership across government, with community organisations, service providers, the research community and other stakeholders, to bring about real change to reduce gambling harm. The next three years will be pivotal and I look forward to what we can achieve together.

Thank you to everyone who contributed to this plan. A plan to improve the health and wellbeing of our community.

The Hon. David Harris, MP

Minister for Gaming and Racing

A message from the RGF Chair



It is my privilege to introduce the Office of Responsible Gambling's Strategic Plan 2024-27. As Chair of the Responsible Gambling Fund Trust since December 2023, I am excited to be part of setting our strategic direction over the next three years.

While I am new to the role of Chair, the Office of Responsible Gambling is maturing, with this being its third strategic plan. This plan builds on progress so far and capitalises on what has worked well. It also commits us to adapting and refreshing our focus and approach to make the most of the opportunities that present themselves, and to anticipate and respond to emerging risks and trends.

As well as continuing to build on the success of GambleAware services and support, and the successful delivery of awareness and education initiatives, we will look for ways to maximise our leadership and influence, and work in partnership with those sectors and organisations that can help us make a difference.

We will also continue to build and apply evidence about gambling harm and will focus on supporting research that can make a real difference for people in NSW as well as developing the broader capacity of the gambling research field.

I congratulate the Office of Responsible Gambling on its achievements so far and thank our partners and stakeholders for taking the time to share their experiences and ideas with us during our consultations.

I look forward to providing leadership over the life of this plan and encourage all those with a role in preventing and minimising gambling harm to join us in working towards zero gambling harm in NSW.

Chris Bertinshaw

Chair
Responsible Gambling Fund Trust

Strategic context

About this plan

This is the third strategic plan for the NSW Office of Responsible Gambling (the Office). It builds on our achievements over the past six years.

The plan has been informed by research and consultation. We have heard from people with lived experience of gambling harm, community organisations, service providers, researchers, industry and government stakeholders.

They have confirmed their ongoing support for our focus and approach. They have also helped us to identify ways that we can build on and improve our work.

This plan will guide our work over the next three years. It sets the outcomes we aim to achieve and how we will measure success. We will continue to report each year against our progress as we bring this plan to life.

Our approach

Gambling harm is a public health issue. Social, economic and environmental factors shape the impact of gambling on individuals and on our communities. They are an important consideration in our work.

As well as focusing on these factors, we also build the capacity of individuals to make safer choices and reduce the risk of harm for themselves or for people around them.

This harm minimisation approach is important, as gambling is a legal activity that some people choose to participate in. That means we need to educate people and communities so that those who gamble now or in future do so more safely, and so that people and communities in NSW can have a positive influence on the choices made by those around them.

This plan provides a framework for the public health and harm minimisation approach we take to gambling harm.

Our work aims to complement, inform and support the work of the NSW and Commonwealth Government Departments who set the regulatory conditions for reducing harm from gambling.

The changing landscape

There have been significant changes in the gambling landscape in NSW in the past three years.

The way we gamble, and who gambles has continued to evolve. We know from our research that young people are more exposed to gambling and gambling advertising than ever before¹ and that parents are particularly influential.²

We have seen further changes in technology and how it is used for gambling – driven by individuals, by operators, and by government. In the past three years we have seen new trends from the emergence of live streaming gambling to the trials of cashless payment for gaming machines. We have also seen many people continue to gamble online and more people take it up, with expenditure on online gambling continuing to grow.

Community attitudes towards gambling are also changing. There has been a growing focus in the media and in the community on gambling harm. We know that the community is increasingly concerned about the prevalence of gambling advertising and that sports fans in particular are unhappy with the levels of gambling advertising in sport. There has also been an increasing focus on the risks associated with gambling and the impact on young people in particular.

Over the past three years, there has been significant change in the regulatory environment in NSW with the establishment of the NSW Independent Casino Commission, the creation of the Hospitality and Racing division that we are a part of, and the formation of an Independent Panel on Gaming Reform, which will provide a roadmap for gaming reform later in 2024.

The NSW Government has made significant commitments to reduce harm from gambling in NSW and has introduced significant changes in regulatory requirements, such as:

- the introduction of trials of and requirements for cashless gaming
- introducing gambling incident registers and gaming plans of management for all venues with gaming machines
- a new requirement for key staff in pubs and clubs to do advanced responsible conduct of gambling training
- a new requirement for venues with more than 20 gaming machine entitlements to have designated responsible gambling officers
- reducing the cash-in limit for new machines
- strengthening requirements about the placement of ATMs
- a ban on all external signage for gaming rooms
- a ban on political donations from clubs with electronic gaming machines.

Reform is also occurring at a national level. In addition to changes in NSW requirements, in the past three years multiple measures have been adopted under the National Consumer Protection Framework for online wagering, including Betstop the new, national self-exclusion register. Online gambling was also the subject of a 2023 Commonwealth parliamentary inquiry.

The changes impacting on our work are not limited to the gambling landscape. The impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic accelerated the take-up of digital support by our clients, coinciding with our introduction of the GambleAware model. Launched in 2021, the GambleAware service model is now in place across the state and is ready to be evaluated and refined in the course of the next three years.

¹ Hing N, Russell A, King D, Rockloff M, Browne M, Greer N, Newall P, Sproston K, Chen L and Coughlin S (2020) *NSW Youth Gambling Study 2020*. Sydney: NSW Responsible Gambling Fund.

² Dittman, C. K., Gossner, M., Hing, N., Rockloff, M. J., Browne, M., Russell, A. M. T. & Lole, L. (2023). *The Role of Parents in Youth Gambling*. Sydney, Australia: Office of Responsible Gambling.

The plan

Our vision: NSW working towards zero gambling harm

Our purpose

Our purpose is to:

- prevent and reduce gambling harm, for people at risk and the broader community
- improve individual and community wellbeing, for those affected by gambling harm
- support people to understand their choices and decisions about gambling
- contribute to public debate and influence gambling harm prevention and minimisation by government, industry, community and other stakeholders.

Our guiding principles

We reflect the NSW public sector values of integrity, trust, service and accountability in everything we do, and are guided in our work by these and the following principles:

Inclusion

We engage in ways that are appropriate, safe and respectful and recognise the different needs, experiences and perspectives of people from across NSW.

Empowerment

We are informed by the insights of people affected by gambling and empower individuals and communities to take action on local priorities and issues.

Collaboration

We engage genuinely and transparently to build capacity and support stakeholders to prevent and reduce gambling harm.

Evidence-based

We make decisions and develop our approach based on data, evaluation and research.

Continuous improvement

We monitor and evaluate our work to improve its effectiveness, efficiency and impact.

Future focused

We monitor and respond to emerging issues, trends and developments in practice and policy.

Our outcomes, approach, priorities and measures



Research

Our research builds the evidence base to influence gambling policy, regulation and programs as well as products and behaviour.



Education and awareness

Our education and awareness initiatives empower individuals and the community to understand their choices and decisions about gambling, take action to prevent and reduce gambling harm, and seek support when they need it.



Services and support

Our support and treatment services are multimodal, integrated, tailored to the needs of diverse communities, accessible and effective.



Leadership and influence

Our advice and support leads government, industry, community, and other stakeholders to contribute to a stronger culture of gambling harm prevention and minimisation.

Research



Outcome: Our research builds the evidence base to influence gambling policy, regulation and programs as well as products and behaviour.

Our approach

We fund and support relevant, timely and rigorous research and build capability in the gambling research field. Through the RGF Research Agenda we build an evidence-base that:

- informs and recommends improvements to policy, practice and regulation
- evaluates and guides improvements to programs and support
- contributes to an informed public discussion about gambling harm
- anticipates and responds to emerging risks and trends.

Priorities

- understanding and tracking changes in gambling behaviour and attitudes across the population and in specific groups
- understanding issues affecting different groups and communities across NSW, particularly young people and other vulnerable populations and how to respond
- understanding and monitoring emerging technologies and trends, and their impacts on people and communities in NSW
- sharing and promoting our research findings and their application

- collaborating with other sectors and stakeholders to capitalise on new and existing opportunities to undertake, share and apply research, including across government
- building the knowledge, skills and diversity of gambling researchers.

Measures of success

- research findings are shared with relevant stakeholders and audiences
- research findings are used to improve education, support services, policy, regulation and other harm minimisation practices
- increased capacity, capability and collaboration in Australian gambling research
- increased participation and retention of early-career researchers in the gambling field
- research findings are used to inform further research, including subsequent projects funded by other grant-making bodies.

Education and awareness



Outcome: Our education and awareness initiatives empower individuals and the community to understand their gambling choices and decisions, take action to prevent and reduce gambling harm, and seek support when they need it.

Our approach

We develop, deliver and support:

- awareness campaigns for the general community and priority populations
- tailored education and awareness initiatives for culturally and linguistically diverse communities, young people, Aboriginal communities, lower socio-economic and other priority populations
- accessible, engaging and evidence-based information and resources for the general community, priority populations and stakeholders.

Priorities

- reaching and influencing priority populations through the online and physical settings they already access, like health and community services, and Aboriginal controlled community organisations
- increasing the uptake of education and awareness initiatives for young people and parents, particularly in school settings and online
- building the profile of GambleAware and the new digital platform as the place to go for information and support through campaigns and other initiatives

- supporting GambleAware services to deliver high-quality and responsive education and awareness initiatives in their local communities
- coordinating GambleAware Week to build community awareness of the risks of gambling and how to seek information and support.

Measures of success

- increased understanding of gambling risks and harm
- reduced stigma associated with gambling harm
- increased awareness of where to access information and support
- more people using strategies to prevent gambling harm for themselves or others
- increased reach to priority populations including people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities, Aboriginal people and veterans.

Services and support



Outcome: Our support and treatment services are multimodal, integrated, tailored to the needs of diverse communities, accessible and effective.

Our approach

We fund, support and evaluate the delivery of high-quality services and support by:

- our GambleAware providers
- the GambleAware Helpline
- the GambleAware Aboriginal, Multicultural and peer support services
- Gambling Help Online.

Priorities

- continuing to fund and oversee the GambleAware model, including gambling counselling, financial counselling, peer support and self-help options
- launching and promoting the GambleAware digital platform to allow people to make appointments online
- supporting the full and effective implementation of peer support across the state as a non-clinical option for people seeking help to address gambling harm
- building capability across the GambleAware service system to improve outcomes, particularly for people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities, Aboriginal people, young people and other priority populations

- strengthening referral pathways to and from GambleAware services with relevant health, community and legal services
- evaluating the implementation and effectiveness of the GambleAware service system to inform improvements to services and support now and in future.

Measures of success

- increase in the number of people using GambleAware services and support, particularly from priority populations
- people using GambleAware services are satisfied with the services they receive
- improved wellbeing and reduced harm for people using GambleAware services
- increased referrals from the health and community services sectors.

Leadership and influence



Outcome: Our advice and support leads government, community, industry and other stakeholders to contribute to a stronger culture of gambling harm prevention and minimisation.

Our approach

We take a considered and intentional approach to working with other stakeholders and sectors including by:

- providing policy and practice advice on gambling harm prevention and minimisation
- participating on and contributing to working groups and other mechanisms set up to develop national and state-based policy
- providing advice, resources and other practical support to relevant community and government organisations and sectors
- bringing together relevant stakeholders to enable and share best practice gambling harm prevention and minimisation.
- strengthening the focus and capacity of the community, health, education and other key sectors to prevent and respond to gambling harm
- working with other agencies to improve their understanding of gambling as a factor in relevant issues and portfolios, particularly for priority populations
- supporting collaboration between research, community, industry and other stakeholders that is ethical, transparent and impactful, with clear conflict of interest and declaration processes
- building on our partnerships with sports clubs to further challenge the normalisation of sports betting and sports betting advertising in sport.

Priorities

- informing and supporting the development and implementation of state and national reforms to prevent and minimise gambling harm
- providing data and evidence on gambling harm risks and opportunities to regulators, decision-makers, government and other stakeholders
- supporting gambling harm minimisation practice and initiatives by industry through research, resources and advice

Measures of success

- new and improved regulatory responses to gambling harm introduced
- gambling harm recognised in relevant government strategies and policies
- gambling harm prevention is supported by the community, health and education sectors.

Governance framework

The Minister for Gaming and Racing oversees the Responsible Gambling Fund (RGF), which is administered by Trustees.

The Trustees provide advice to the Minister on the expenditure from the RGF consistent with the RGF Trust Deed. The RGF Trust also plays an expert advisory role for the Minister and the Department in relation to gambling policy and regulation matters where required.

The Office of Responsible Gambling supports the Trustees to provide advice to the Minister on the use of the RGF and on gambling policy matters.

The diagram shows how the Office and Trustees work with the regulator Liquor & Gaming NSW, as well as GambleAware providers who deliver direct services to the community.



Published by the Office of Responsible Gambling
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To find out more, visit our website: gambleaware.nsw.gov.au

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