

16 September 2019

NSW RESIDENTS URGED TO ‘CHECK IN’ DURING RESPONSIBLE GAMBLING AWARENESS WEEK 2019

Residents across NSW are being encouraged to think about their gambling during Responsible Gambling Awareness Week 2019, which will run from 16 to 22 September.

Just over half of adults in NSW participate in some form of gambling.* While for many people gambling is a source of entertainment and enjoyment, it can present real challenges for some.

The theme of the week - check in, don't wait until they're broke to fix it - encourages people to better understand risky gambling behaviours, check in on their own or others' gambling, and start a conversation with family and friends who may be at risk.

Natalie Wright, Director of the Office of Responsible Gambling, said the NSW Government is committed to promoting responsible gambling and addressing gambling harm within the state.

“In 2019/20, \$35 million has been allocated to responsible gambling programs and initiatives to prevent and minimise gambling harm, promote a safe gambling environment and support those impacted by problem gambling.

“This includes funding Gambling Help services to provide over 33,000 counselling sessions to 7,300 clients throughout the year.”

To launch the week, the Office of Responsible Gambling has unveiled the new *Check in with the Checkmates* platform and game, housed on the Responsible Gambling website. The platform is designed for people to learn how to spot the warning signs of risky gambling and to get some tips for how to better manage their gambling.

The week will also be supported by community events across the state, including over 24 events supported by the Office of Responsible Gambling, as well as other events hosted by Gambling Help services, community groups and the industry itself. The events will encourage communities to start meaningful conversations and learn practical ways to keep gambling under control.

Ms Wright said it's important for people to think carefully about their gambling choices during the current NRL and AFL finals and upcoming spring racing carnival.

There are particular risks around online sports betting which is the fastest growing type of gambling. In 2018, one in three Australians who placed a bet did so online, more than double the rate in 2012.

The NSW Government is taking the lead in cracking down on unlawful online gambling advertising with tough new laws currently before Parliament.

For more information on Responsible Gambling Awareness Week visit responsiblegambling.nsw.gov.au.

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*Source: Roy Morgan Gambling Currency Report: NSW (excluding ACT) Gambling Industry – Market Overview. June 2018. Melbourne: Roy Morgan Research

Contact for media requests:

Key media and event messages

What is Responsible Gambling Awareness Week?

Responsible Gambling Awareness Week is an annual initiative to increase awareness of gambling and gambling harm in the NSW community. In 2019 it will be held from 16 – 22 September. It is an opportunity to increase the community's understanding of risky gambling behaviour, encourage people to recognise when their gambling may place them at risk of harm, provide information on practical ways to keep gambling under control and how to get help if they need it.

What is responsible gambling?

For individuals, responsible gambling is about exercising control and making informed choices. Responsible gambling is about keeping gambling within affordable limits of money and time and only gambling in a way that is enjoyable and in balance with other activities and responsibilities.

For individuals, gambling responsibly is about treating the experience as a fun activity or a social event, not as an investment or a way to make money. Gambling is not the answer to financial problems, nor is it a solution to feeling low, stressed or frustrated.

For gambling providers and operators, responsible gambling is the provision of safe, socially responsible and supportive environments where the potential for harm is minimised and where people can make informed decisions about their participation in gambling.

Why do we need to promote responsible gambling?

For many people gambling is an entertaining and enjoyable activity. However, gambling is a serious issue for a small number of people in our community and can be the cause of harm to themselves and others.

Problem gambling is characterised by difficulties in limiting money and/or time spent on gambling which leads to adverse consequences for the gambler, others, or for the community. Gambling harm can relate to financial, health, relationships, education and employment, social and psychological wellbeing.

Why Check In?

During RGAW people are encouraged to 'check in' on their own, their family, friends and colleagues gambling and provide appropriate support or direction.

How can people check in?

The Office of Responsible Gambling has created a series of tools to assist in identifying risky behaviours, starting conversations and, if needed, seek help. People can use these tools to check in, or simply start a conversation.