

Australian Churches Gambling Taskforce

Restraining Online Misery – Measures to curb online gambling companies

Issued August 2014

“Again, if it’s a late night thing, if I’m ten foot tall and bullet proof I can bet plenty, putting more money in it than I can afford and then losing it... If you’ve got access to credit cards and cheque accounts that have money in them, you tend to put more in and try chase your losses until you get it back, which can be very, very dangerous.”

58 year old male gambler who is at high risk of problem gambling talking about his experience of online gambling in Nerilee Hing *et al*, ‘Interactive Gambling’, Gambling Research Australia, March 2014, p. 182.

Research released in March 2014 found that 1% of gamblers had gambling problems and 18.6% of gamblers reported experiencing at least some negative consequences from their gambling. Online gamblers appeared to be at greater risk of experiencing some problems. Sports betting and betting on races represent the largest online gambling markets.

Online gamblers were found to have higher levels of psychological distress than other gamblers. The convenience of online gambling, combined with social isolation and boredom, contributed to problem gambling.

Gamblers who gamble online choose a gambling company based on price and promotions, as well as reputation and products offered. At least one-third of online gamblers were not concerned about gambling with offshore gambling companies. Over three-quarters of online gamblers reported using online gambling for at least half of their gambling.

Online gamblers reported greater losses attributed to the ease and swiftness of depositing money repeatedly into online accounts, through automatically linked credit and debit cards and bank accounts, reducing any ‘cooling off’ period and increasing opportunities to chase losses. Online gamblers readily provide credit, with no measures to confirm whether customers could afford such credit. By comparison, credit betting is banned for most other forms of gambling, such as pokies and lotteries

Online gamblers reported that promotional offers led some to place bets they would not have otherwise placed. Some gamblers reported that their frustration at losing the promotional bets resulted in them chasing losses.

Online gamblers who were seeking help due to having a gambling problem stated that e-mail and pop-up online advertisements were excessive and predatory as they were often displayed when the person was online for activities other than gambling.

What you can do

Write polite and respectful letters to e-mails to

The Hon Malcolm Turnbull MP
Minister for Communications
PO Box 6022
House of Representatives
Parliament House
Canberra, ACT, 2600

The Hon. Tony Abbott MP
Prime Minister
PO Box 6022
House of Representatives
Parliament House
Canberra, ACT, 2600

E-mail: Malcolm.Turnbull.MP@aph.gov.au.

Salutation: Dear Prime Minister

Salutation: Dear Minister

Points to make in your letters:

- Express deep concern at the harms caused by online gambling in Australia, noting that people who gamble online are more likely to have gambling problems compared to other gamblers based on research by Gambling Research Australia.
- Note the recommendations made by the Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy in 2012 to reduce the harm from online gambling and ask that the Federal Government revisit these recommendations and adopt those that will curb the harm online gambling causes.
- Specifically ask that all inducements that seek get people to gamble online or increase their gambling online be banned, noting that research has found that such inducements lead to an increase in problem gambling
- Given that the research into online gambling has found that allowing credit betting online increases problem gambling, ask that the Federal Government ban online gambling businesses from offering credit betting.
- Empower the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) to be able to issue fines on gambling businesses that advertise in violation of the restrictions on advertising imposed by the *Interactive Gambling Act*.