

Gambling Regulation Strategic Plan 2022-25

Introduction

In December 2018, the Liquor and Gambling Commissioner (**Commissioner**) became the sole regulator for all gambling industries following the abolition of the Independent Gambling Authority by the State Government. Since then, the Commissioner has overseen an extensive review of all gambling legislation, resulting in significant gambling reforms which took effect on 3 December 2020. These reforms provide increased protections for South Australians affected by gambling harm, while also striking an important balance by ensuring a well-regulated and economically viable gambling industry.

As part of the ongoing commitment to reduce harm caused by gambling, the Commissioner has developed a strategic plan to provide clear direction and objectives around the regulation of the gambling industry in South Australia over the next three years. The plan details a clear path towards ensuring measures are in place to minimise the harmful impact of gambling in South Australia, while maintaining a gambling industry that is able to continue to operate in a responsible manner.

Background

Gambling products and activities are regulated by the Commissioner through Consumer and Business Services (**CBS**). This includes conducting ongoing compliance inspections of gambling venues, assessing applications for new premises and gambling products, approving gambling promotions, and driving and implementing any changes to gambling legislation.

The Commissioner is committed to reducing the prevalence and severity of harm caused by gambling by continuing to monitor the operation of the State's gambling legislation and to recommend to the Government where reform is required to ensure that commitment is upheld and realised.

South Australians have access to a wide range of gambling products, both terrestrial and online, in a variety of venues. This includes around 400 hotels, 40 clubs, a casino and a large number of wagering and SA Lotteries agencies. These gambling providers contribute to the South Australian economy by employing in excess of 47,000 staff and through payment of over \$400 million in taxes annually.

In 2005, the Australian Hotels Association SA Branch established Gaming Care as an early intervention agency. Similarly, Clubs SA established Club Safe in 2006. These approved industry bodies support staff of gaming venues to identify and engage with patrons displaying indicators of gambling harm, assist with referrals to gambling help services, and facilitate ongoing staff training. In addition, the SkyCity Host Responsibility Program was established to actively respond to and engage with patrons who may be experiencing difficulty with their gambling while at the casino premises.

Mission Statement

The *Gambling Administration Act 2019 (Act)* states that the Commissioner must have regard to the objects of the Act when exercising powers and functions. Importantly, when considering whether a matter is in the public interest, minimising gambling related harm must be at the forefront.

The Gambling Prevalence in South Australia Survey (2018) published by the Office for Problem Gambling showed that 65% of South Australians had participated in at least one gambling activity in the preceding 12 months. Although the number of South Australians choosing to gamble has reduced over time (69% in the 2012 study), the percentage of the population who meet the criteria for problem gambling remains steady at 0.7%. A further 2.2% are classified as moderate risk, with 4.6% falling into the low-risk category.

There has been a focus on providing help and assistance to the cohort classified as problem gamblers, as this is the group that likely suffers the greatest harm. However, this restricted focus does not properly recognise the significant number of vulnerable people that fall within other at-risk categories of gamblers. Without appropriate measures in place, a person may very easily move from being classified as a moderate risk gambler to a high risk or problem gambler. Through early intervention, a person's level of risk can remain consistent (e.g., low or moderate risk), or even decrease (e.g., from moderate to low risk). Through effective regulation and a strong compliance regime, it may be possible to provide greater safeguards and protections for gambling participants and create a culture of responsible service and early intervention within the gambling industry.

South Australia also enjoys a strong and vibrant hospitality and tourism industry, and it is important that this industry thrives. Regulation must therefore strike a difficult balance between allowing gambling providers to offer a legitimate leisure activity for those that choose to participate, and ensuring consumer protections are in place to minimise the harm caused by gambling.

Consideration has been given to ensuring this balance between safe gambling practices and products, and a hospitality and tourism industry that can continue to grow by developing a mission statement and strategic plan that is in line with the objects of the Act.

Commitment to excellence

The Commissioner will continue to evaluate the effectiveness of the Gambling Regulation Strategic Plan on an annual basis through to 2025 to ensure that CBS is on track to meet the goals outlined below. Additional initiatives will be developed over the next three years as required and the plan will continue to be revised to guide CBS in working towards the vision to deliver ethical and effective gambling regulation to ensure all South Australians, and interstate and international visitors are able to gamble in safe and responsible gambling environments.

Purpose

Delivering effective regulation to ensure a safe, responsible and economically viable gambling sector in South Australia.

Goals

1. Evidence based regulation

By ensuring policy decisions are grounded in research and evidence from a variety of sources, stakeholders can be confident that gambling regulation is appropriate and based on best practice. CBS will remain a leader in modern regulation by continuing to review current practices and look for opportunities to improve and innovate.

2. Safer gambling practices

Gaming machines, wagering, casino gambling and lottery products are all legal forms of entertainment for adults. While the majority of people gamble in a manner that is safe for them, gambling is inherently risky, and many patrons suffer gambling harm. Therefore, protections must be in place in relation to both the gambling products and the operations of gambling providers to limit and reduce the risk of harm, and the extent to which patrons or their families may be harmed.

3. Socially responsible gambling providers

The gambling industry operates under a social contract and only maintains the good will of the public so long as it operates within legislative and ethical boundaries and community standards. Through encouraging gambling providers to proactively operate above and beyond their licence obligations, for instance, proactively responding to possible gambling harm indicators, the early intervention approach to limit and reduce gambling harm becomes the norm.

4. Empowering customers to make safer, informed decisions

Although most South Australians who choose to gamble are able to do so without adverse effect, gambling is a risky activity that may lead to harm. By arming gambling patrons with accurate and clear information on the chances of winning and the risks of gambling, while also reducing stigma around accessing support and management options, people can make more informed choices around their gambling behaviour.

5. Working together to reduce harm and protect South Australians

Reducing gambling harm cannot be achieved through regulation alone. Without collaboration with industry, gambling help services, those affected by gambling harm and other Government agencies, CBS cannot hope to achieve any of the strategic priorities listed above. By working collaboratively with all stakeholders, CBS can ensure that the right level of regulation is achieved, and that reducing the prevalence and severity of gambling related harm and protecting the public from gambling related criminal activity is a priority for everyone.