

Our position on gambling harm

When we began operating in July 2022, we committed ourselves to:

- minimising the harm caused by gambling
- ensuring gambling activities are provided safely and fairly
- holding gambling operators to account against their social licence, not just their regulatory obligations.

For further details, see Our Strategy which is available on our website.

The purpose of this document is to make our views about gambling harm clearly known. We have expressed our views in a series of statements.

1. Our harm minimisation objective guides all our regulatory decisions, actions and expectations.

- The commission exists because gambling is a legal, but regulated, activity in Victoria.
- Our new legislative objective requires we minimise gambling harm **and** problem gambling.
- In the past, the regulator was only required to focus on minimising harm **caused** by problem gambling.
- We are required to minimise harm regardless of its prevalence.

2. Gambling causes harm.

- Harm from gambling is experienced in countless ways.
- Gambling also harms people not directly participating in gambling.
- Gambling that has not led to harm is sometimes called recreational gambling.
- A person's characteristics and motivations do not alter the harm caused.
- The harm experienced by one person is not lessened by any associated benefits accruing to other people.
- Harm from gambling is not lessened by the risk-taking inherent in a game of chance.

3. Recovery from harm does not alter the causal role played by gambling.

- Financial resources, psychological resilience, access to social supports and services, may aid someone's recovery from harm, but they do not diminish:
 - the role gambling played (is playing) in causing that harm, or
 - the severity of the harm caused in the first instance.
- The potential for someone to recover from harm does not lessen the importance of preventing harm (or reducing the risk of harm) in the first place.

4. Harm is preventable.

- A possibility of harm remains whenever someone is gambling.
- Disregarding the possibility of harm is equivalent to disregarding harm.
- Preventing harm means acting immediately and decisively whenever there are signs of harm or possible harm.
- Preventing harm involves: Community education and support, Regulation and enforcement, and Gambling providers acting responsibly.

5. Gambling markets gravitate toward harmful offerings.

- Gambling providers compete to attract customers.
- Products and environments that make gambling more attractive can be expected to also make **more gambling** more attractive.
- More gambling increases the risk of harm.
- Lawful offerings do not remove the possibility of harm.

6. Gambling regulation seeks to prevent harm.

- Regulators must remain alert to new sources and risks of harm.
- Regulation and regulatory practices must evolve to prevent new industry products and practices from causing harm.
- Regulation reduces harm but will not prevent it entirely.

7. Gambling providers have a duty to care for the wellbeing of their customers and their communities.

- Gambling providers obligations extend beyond merely complying with the law because:
 - they alone choose to provide gambling services which cause harm, and
 - harm occurs despite education and regulation.
- Providers are responsible for turning their minds to identifying and preventing harm.
- A duty to act exists wherever harm is identified or might reasonably be suspected.
- Failure to honour the duty invites scrutiny into whether a gambling provider is complying with its legal obligations.

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