



ACT
Government



Ms Lyn Beverley
Committee Secretary
Joint Select Committee on Gambling Reform
PO Box 6100
Parliament House Canberra ACT 2600

Via email: gamblingreform@aph.gov.au

Dear Ms Beverley

I refer to the Joint Select Committee on Gambling Reform's (the Committee) correspondence received on 13 February 2012 regarding the Committee's inquiry into the prevention and treatment of problem gambling.

In response to the Committee's questions I am able to advise you of the following information:

Legislative Requirements

Under the *Gambling and Racing Control Act 1999*, the ACT Gambling and Racing Commission (the Commission) is tasked with reducing the risks and costs of problem gambling to both individuals and the community.

To assist in meeting this function, the *Gambling and Racing Control (Code of Practice) Regulation 2002* (the Code of Practice) was developed. The Code of Practice covers all ACT gambling providers and was designed to provide gambling licensees with a minimum set of standards that must be met when providing patrons access to their gambling products. Specifically, the Code provides mandatory requirements on advertising and promotions, provision of information to gamblers, training of staff, exclusions, cash payouts, physical venue requirements where appropriate and measures on dealing with problem gamblers. Harm minimisation measures that are particular to one form of gambling are also contained within industry specific legislation rather than the Code of Practice (eg *Gaming Machine Act 2004*, *Casino Control Act 2006*).

The Code of Practice is available at: <http://www.legislation.act.gov.au/sl/2002-28/default.asp>

Responsible Gambling Messages

The Commission determines the form and content of warning notices under a disallowable instrument. These notices must be displayed on all gaming machines and at the entrance to each gaming area. A copy of the approved warning notices is available at:

<http://www.legislation.act.gov.au/di/2004-184/default.asp>

[These requirements can be found under s.151 of the Gaming Machine Act 2004.]

Gambling Advertising and Inducements

The ACT has specific restrictions on gambling advertising, promotions and inducements. In addition to these requirements a licensee must not send promotional material about gambling to an excluded person.

[These requirements can be found under Schedule 1, s.1.20, s.1.28 - s.1.31 of the Code of Practice.]

Early Intervention Strategies and Training of Staff

All staff members who are directly involved in providing gambling services or who supervise gambling services must complete an approved training course every five years. In addition, each licensee in the ACT must nominate at least one gambling contact officer (GCO) to act as the main point of contact for patrons concerning gambling issues. All GCOs must complete an additional approved training course every five years. The GCO has several functions and responsibilities under the Code of Practice including providing patrons that may have a gambling problem with advice about the availability of counselling and support services.

[These requirements can be found under Schedule 1, s.1.4, s.1.9 - s.1.11 of the Code of Practice.]

Self-Exclusion

Under the Code of Practice a person may request to be excluded from a venue because of a problem with their gambling. This is done by completing a 'Deed of Exclusion' form (available at: <http://www.legislation.act.gov.au/af/2004-37/default.asp>). A person may nominate to be excluded from multiple venues on the same form. A person who is the subject of an exclusion deed must then be prevented from gambling at the venue.

[These requirements can be found under Schedule 1, s.1.13 of the Code of Practice.]

Problem Gambling Assistance Fund

In December 2010 the ACT Legislative Assembly passed amendments to the *Gaming Machine Act 2004* (the Act) to establish the Problem Gambling Assistance Fund (the Fund). The Fund is sourced from a levy placed on gaming machine licensees and commenced on 1 July 2011. Each licensee is required to contribute 0.6 per cent of their gross gaming machine revenue to the Fund on a monthly basis. The Fund also receives voluntary contributions from ACTTAB and Casino Canberra.

Expenditure from the Fund, as outlined in the Act, is for the purpose of alleviating problem gambling or the disadvantages that arise from problem gambling and for providing or ascertaining information about problem gambling. Assistance may be through such mechanisms as the provision of counselling services, relevant research and education and awareness programs.

[These requirements can be found under s.163A – s.163C of the Gaming Machine Act 2004.]

ACT Problem Gambling Counselling and Support Service

Assistance for problem gambling is readily available through the ACT Gambling Counselling and Support Service, which is operated by Mission Australia. The Service provides problem gambling and financial counselling services, educational information on problem gambling, self-help techniques and linkages to other support services such as family guidance, alcohol and drug assistance as well as housing and employment opportunities. The Service is free and provides both face-to-face and phone counselling. It is funded by the Problem Gambling Assistance Fund.

A copy of the Mission Australia Service Funding Agreement is available at:

http://www.procurement.act.gov.au/contracts/contracts_register/contracts/contracts/economic_development_directorate/2010.xxxx.xxx/2010.15652.220

Problem Gambling Research

The Commission is required to monitor and research the social effects of gambling and problem gambling. This is achieved through a range of activities and strategies in association with the Centre for Gambling Research (the Centre) at the Australian National University. The Centre is jointly funded by the ANU and the Commission and is an important resource in providing guidance for future policy development. The Centre has undertaken several research projects in recent years including a detailed prevalence study of gambling in the ACT.

Copies of this research is available at: www.gamblingandracing.act.gov.au/Research.htm

If you have any questions concerning these matters please contact me on telephone 6207 0359.

Yours sincerely

Greg Jones
Chief Executive
ACT Gambling and Racing Commission

21 March 2012