

Minimising Gambling Harm in South Australia

Investment Plan

2021–2026

Funded through
the Gamblers
Rehabilitation Fund



Government of South Australia
Department of Human Services

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Foreword

Around two-thirds of South Australians participate in gambling, yet it can cause significant harm to them, their families and the wider community.

Unfortunately, the proportion of South Australians engaging in risky gambling has not changed over time, despite a focussed effort on treating those experiencing the highest levels of harm.

We are also experiencing a changing gambling landscape that includes the normalisation of sports betting, making it harder to recognise and respond to risky behaviour before it escalates.

Recent changes to legislation strive to combat risky gambling by introducing new requirements for gaming operators and gaming environments.

In a state-first, the new laws also commit to requiring investment of the Gamblers Rehabilitation Fund in prevention, early intervention, public education and gambling research.

Our government took this approach amid growing recognition world-wide that to have a meaningful impact in preventing and minimising gambling harm we need to look beyond treatment and address the broader contributors to harm.

We've backed it with an additional \$1 million a year into South Australia's Gamblers Rehabilitation Fund.

South Australia's Office for Problem Gambling has consulted with industry, professionals and people who have experienced gambling harm to develop this *Investment Plan 2021–2026*, setting out a clear vision for minimising gambling harm and the path we will take to get there.

Working together, with public and private sectors as well as local communities, we can strengthen our approach to gambling harm and build a safer, stronger South Australia.



Hon Michelle Lensink MLC
Minister for Human Services



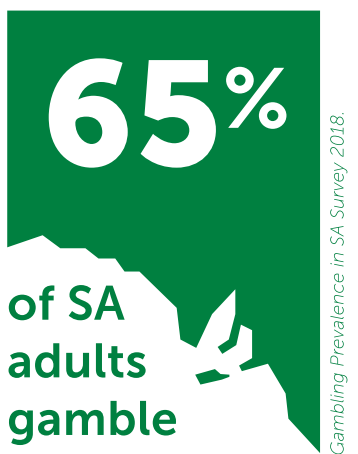
Why does South Australia need this plan?

Preventing and minimising gambling harm is a South Australian Government priority.

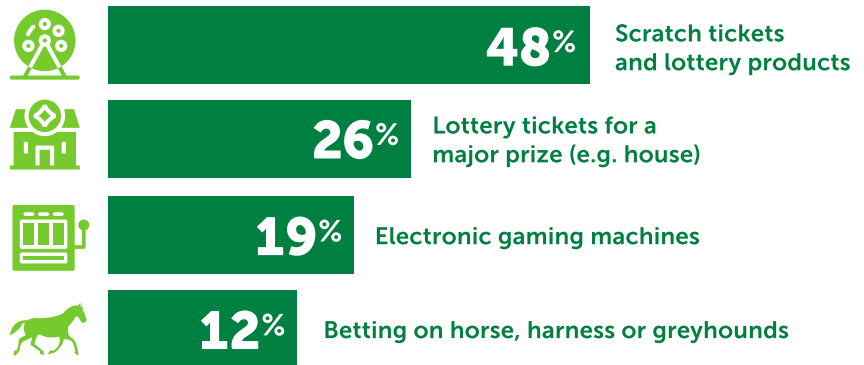
Growth in gambling marketing and more easily accessed gambling products creates challenges to preventing and responding to risky gambling – when people have difficulty limiting their time or money spent betting.

Harms caused by gambling are often misunderstood, underestimated and attributed to poor choices made by individual gamblers. A preventative public health approach can prove beneficial by avoiding stigmatising individuals.

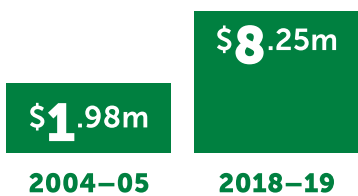
SA GAMBLING AT A GLANCE:



Most popular gambling activities in 2018



Losses on sports betting



72% seeking help in SA is for problems with electronic gaming machines



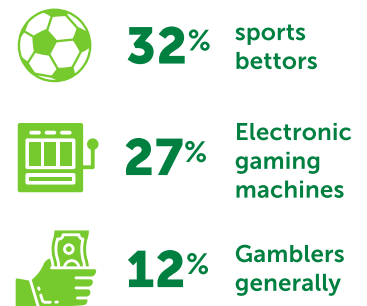
Despite EGM use 30% in 2005 ↓ 19% in 2018.

40,000

engage in high or moderate risk gambling* each year



Risky gambling is more common among:

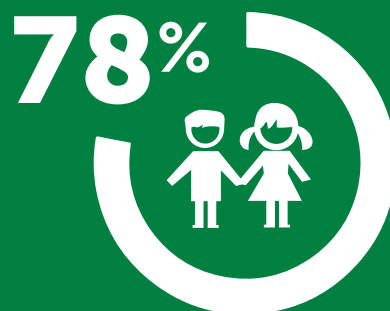


* Risky gambling means difficulties in limiting time or money spent gambling and is linked to gambling harm. Gambling harm is when gambling causes a bad outcome or makes a situation worse.

Sports betting

Growth in sports betting is attributed to an increase in gambling advertising as well as improved access to online betting platforms. This has meant that sports betting is increasingly perceived by the community to be normal, easy, low-risk, and an essential part of social events.

The community is growing increasingly concerned that children's and adolescents' exposure to sports betting has the potential to increase their risk of experiencing gambling harm in the future.



Concerned how much sports betting advertising **children are exposed to.**

81% Believe government should take action to reduce the amount of sports betting advertising.



92% agree it's **important to talk to children** and adolescents about the risk of betting on sports.

But only **37%** feel informed enough to have the conversation.

South Australia's gambling landscape

Gambling is a legal activity in South Australia for people aged 18 years and over.

In 2018–19, South Australians lost \$1 billion to gambling. For some individuals, families and communities the harm experienced from gambling is more than financial.

South Australia has a **well-established system designed to respond to risky gambling**. This includes legislation, regulation and codes of practice that ensure gambling products are offered in a responsible manner. It also includes a well-funded gambling help service system that delivers counselling and support to diverse groups and works to raise awareness of the help available. This system has traditionally prioritised treatment for people experiencing the highest levels of gambling harm and addiction.

Regulation

Consumer and Business Services (CBS), within the Attorney-General's Department, is responsible for all gambling regulatory functions in South Australia.

This includes implementing recent gambling reforms and ensuring industry compliance.

Harm minimisation

The Office for Problem Gambling, within the Department of Human Services, administers the Gamblers Rehabilitation Fund (GRF) and implements gambling harm minimisation initiatives.

It also provides public policy advice to the SA Government about gambling behaviours and harm.

Industry

Clubs SA, AHA SA and the Casino Host Responsibility programs support staff to identify patrons struggling with gambling, facilitate referrals to help services and work closely with local support services.

COST OF GAMBLING TO SA COMMUNITY



The plan – minimising gambling harm

There is growing recognition that minimising gambling harm requires us to look beyond treatment for ‘problem gamblers’ and towards activities that enable people, social networks and communities to make healthy choices.

To do this we must address the social, economic and environmental contributors to gambling harm, **prioritise actions that prevent harm**, and ensure our service system can intervene early and support recovery across all levels of harm.

Significant legislative reform in December 2019 mandated investment in prevention, early intervention, public education and gambling research while introducing new requirements for gaming operators and environments to protect the community from gambling related harm.

This *Investment Plan 2021–2026* outlines clear steps toward activities to prevent and minimise gambling harm in South Australia.

The plan prioritises actions that:

- 1** raise awareness of gambling harm
- 2** deliver prevention and early intervention responses
- 3** ensure people get the right help at the right time
- 4** contribute to an agile system that can prevent and respond to emerging harm and need.

The Gamblers Rehabilitation Fund (GRF) – prevention, early intervention, treatment and support

The South Australian Government invests in a range of gambling help services and gambling harm prevention and minimisation activities through the Gamblers Rehabilitation Fund.



Treatment
Support

Prevention
Early intervention
Research
Community education

GAMBLERS REHABILITATION FUND

A strong foundation

Historically, laws governing the GRF mandated that at least 85% of its funds should be spent on programs to rehabilitate people engaging in high-risk gambling.

As a result, the existing gambling help service system prioritises investment in:

- **treatment**
e.g. intensive therapeutic services, Gambling Helpline
- **financial and other therapeutic support services**
e.g. face to face counselling
- **raising awareness among gamblers of the help available**
e.g. in venue communication campaigns.

Modernising responses to gambling harm

There is growing recognition that factors beyond the individual contribute to the risk of gambling harm e.g.:

- when social norms (behaviours) influence gambling participation
- environments are deliberately designed to influence gambling behaviours.

Steps to prevent and minimise harm need to reach beyond the individual by considering the environmental, social and systemic contributors to gambling harm.

Parliament expanded the GRF's scope in December 2019 to allow for investment in:

- prevention activities
- public education and information programs
- treatment and counselling
- information and advice relevant to gambling harm
- gambling research.

Risky gambling

Certain people or groups are known to be more vulnerable to risky gambling.

The co-occurrence of risky gambling with other issues has important implications for the way in which we prevent, identify and support those experiencing gambling harm.

It points to the need for targeted and tailored education, shared screening and assessment tools, clear referral pathways across the diverse range of services available in South Australia, as well as holistic or wrap-around support.

Gambling help services must be integrated with the wider human services, health and justice systems.

Risky gambling?

Spending more than you can afford?

Feeling guilty about your gambling?

Chasing your losses?

Losing track of time when gambling?

SA's risky gamblers are more likely to be:



Male



Aged 18–34



Employed full-time

Analysis of SA gambling data 2018.

80% of people seeking gambling help in SA describe additional issues including:



Financial



Mental health



Family



Substance abuse

In SA, risky gambling is more prevalent among people from:

culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds (4.2% report risky gambling)

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (5.6%)

socially and economically vulnerable situations (5.4% of unemployed and 4.3% of those in lowest household income bracket)

some groups e.g. prisoners and homeless.

Gambling harm

Engaging in risky gambling increases an individual's likelihood of experiencing gambling harm.

Harming more than the individual

Family members, friends and colleagues may all be affected by risky gambling.

Intimate partners of high-risk gamblers report declines in financial resources, physical, mental and emotional health as well as increases in personal conflict. Harms to children typically reflect consequences of diminished care and declines in family resources.

Neglect of personal and cultural responsibilities beyond the immediate family can also impact the wider community through productivity, employment, legal, financial, personal and family costs.

Family members are often the primary source of support for risky gamblers and can encourage help-seeking. They need access to relevant information, advice and supports to help their loved ones.

Low, moderate and high-risk gamblers all report adverse impacts from gambling

Victorian research shows that low-risk gamblers account for half of all gambling harm caused to its community. They are likely to benefit from interventions that raise awareness of the potential for harm.

Moderate and high-risk gamblers typically report more severe harms that can have immediate and long-term impacts. Moderate and high-risk gamblers have been shown to benefit from more intensive interventions such as self-help guides, therapeutic and counselling support, peer support and barring.

Intervention should target all levels of risk and be commensurate to the harm experienced.

Gambling-related harm can include:


-  financial harm
-  damage to relationships
-  declines in psychological and emotional well-being and physical health
-  loss of work and study opportunities
-  neglect of cultural responsibilities
-  in some cases, involvement with the criminal justice system.

Gambling harms more than just the gambler




In 2018 the number of South Australians affected by high-risk gambling would fill Adelaide Oval

Severe gambling harms – moderate to high-risk gamblers

- 
 - Bankruptcy
 - End of key relationships
 - Loss of employment and assets
 - Significant psychological distress.

Milder gambling harms – low-risk gamblers

- 
 - Less time with loved ones
 - Loss of trust in relationship
 - Lack of control over gambling
 - Loss of sleep
 - Lowered work performance (tiredness/distraction).

Getting help

Very few people seek help for gambling harm and help-seekers are often at crisis point.



Only 3% of SA gamblers **seek help**



Internal:

- stigma
- shame
- problem denial
- unaware of help available.



External:

- cost
- access
- waiting time
- distrust in treatment quality.



Only half of SA adults are aware of **telephone** and **face-to-face** gambling help services.



Yet 82% recall **seeing responsible gambling advertising** or resources promoting gambling help.

2018 SA Gambling Prevalence Survey.

Many help-seekers report delaying treatment due to expectations of negative judgement from the community.

The response is different to that shown to people with more visible addictions (e.g., alcohol, drugs) and contributes to stigma, shame and secrecy displayed by gamblers.

Encouraging more South Australians to seek help requires diversity in the type of support available, flexibility in service delivery, ensuring access, raising awareness of gambling harm, healthy behaviours and the help available, and challenging stigma.

There is a need to improve service access, uptake and impact among those experiencing gambling harm.

Services report around two-thirds of people seeking help have:

- marked to very severe financial problems
- high or very high levels of psychological distress.

Surveys suggest risky gamblers are often perceived by the community as:

- in control of their behaviour
- selfish
- greedy
- impulsive
- irresponsible.

A public health issue

Factors beyond the individual – like social, environmental and regulatory influences – contribute to the risk of gambling harm, and the consequences are wider reaching than the individual.

A public health approach emphasises prevention by promoting healthy behaviour across the community. It requires various interventions, delivered through a range of sectors and settings, and addressing individual, community, systemic and cultural contributors to harm.

Examples of activities that reflect a public health approach include:

1 community partnerships to enable healthy choices
e.g. providing alternative leisure activities

2 community education initiatives
e.g. school-based programs; information for peers, friends and family members

3 building workforce capability to recognise harm and intervene early
e.g. venue staff and allied services

4 using regulation to create healthy environments
e.g. restricting gambling advertising in some contexts.

Developing the investment plan

The investment plan guides government spending of the Gamblers Rehabilitation Fund and informs the use of regulatory and policy levers in the prevention and minimisation of gambling harm in South Australia.

For industry and community, the investment plan identifies opportunities to partner with government and to directly contribute to efforts to better protect South Australians from gambling harm.

We use the investment plan to direct spending towards strategic priorities identified by key stakeholders.

Stakeholders acknowledged the depth of experience within the existing system and expressed strong support for investment in prevention and early intervention.

The resulting investment plan builds on existing efforts to minimise gambling harm and provides a mechanism for focusing and coordinating activity across government, community, and service providers. It describes clear goals for future investment, prioritises strategic areas of focus, and identifies evidence-based, practice informed opportunities to minimise gambling harm.

Importantly, the plan recognises that Government can't do this alone, and a broader response involving local communities, public and private sectors is needed to achieve reductions in gambling harm.

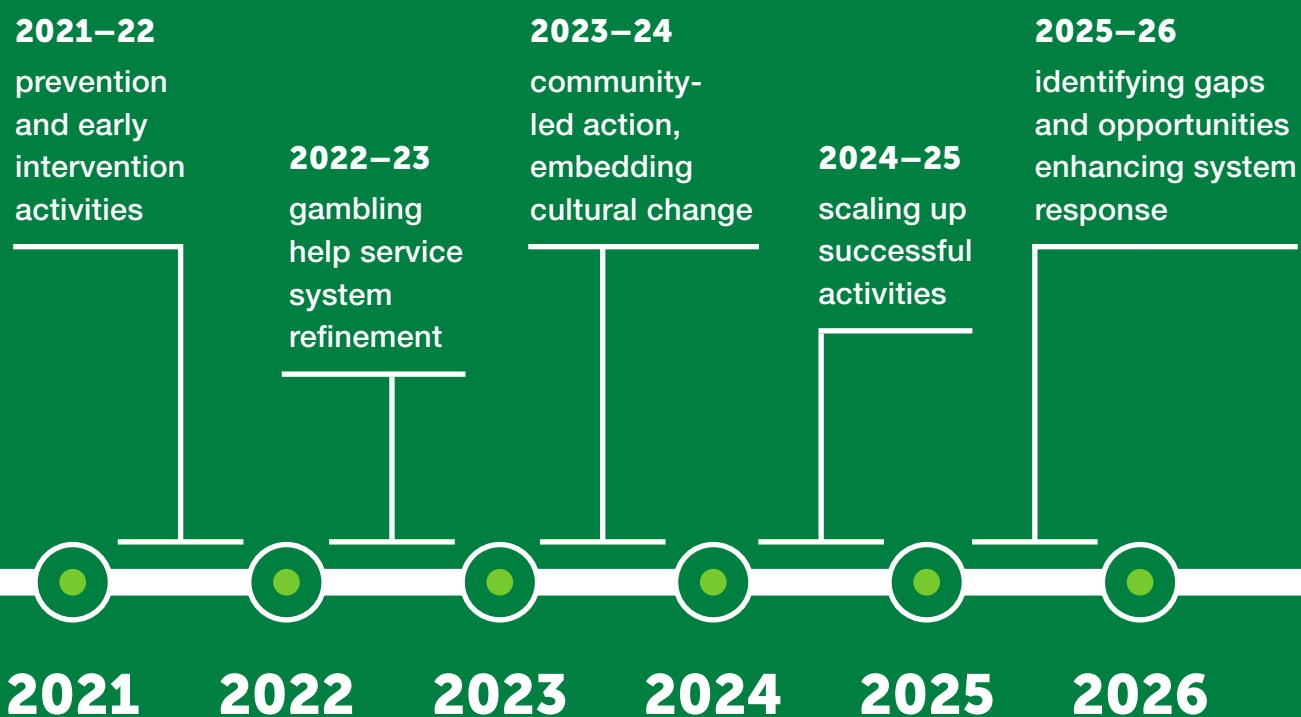
Development of the plan involved:

- 1 Consultation with people who have experienced gambling harm, professionals in the SA gambling help service system, industry bodies tasked with minimising gambling harm**
- 2 Reviewing existing data and academic literature**
- 3 Examining the policy direction taken in other national and international jurisdictions.**

A plan for action

A rolling program of action will continue to build on previous achievements. The Office for Problem Gambling will prepare annual action plans, guiding activity and investment in line with strategic priorities and focus areas.

Key indicators will track progress, with monitoring and evaluation activities measuring the impact of each plan. Key initiatives will be evaluated to inform future decision making and to help understand the impact.



The investment plan

VISION

South Australians talk openly and honestly about gambling harm and take steps to prevent and address it.

All South Australians who choose to participate in gambling can do so safely.

GOAL

South Australians are more likely to access help:

- ★ for their own or someone else’s gambling
- ★ before experiencing crisis
- ★ so they are less likely to relapse.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES AND FOCUS AREAS

South Australians recognise gambling harm and know how to help

- Educate at-risk groups about risky gambling behaviour and how to keep themselves safe, gambling-related harm and the help available.
- Arm South Australians with the knowledge, resources and skills to minimise and prevent gambling harm.
- Deliver culturally and linguistically appropriate messaging about the impact of gambling harm on individuals, families and the community, and promote help seeking.
- Challenge negative community attitudes, common misconceptions and stigma about gambling products, behaviour and harm.

Preventing and intervening early in gambling harm

- Develop targeted prevention and early intervention initiatives for those groups most at risk of experiencing gambling harm.
- Build workforce capability and capacity for harm prevention and to recognise and intervene early in gambling harm, including among venue staff and allied services.
- Support communities to offer diverse, pro-social leisure activities as an alternative to gambling.
- Help grow the evidence base for effective prevention and early intervention in gambling harm.

People get the right support at the right time

- Ensure people experiencing gambling harm have access to a range of client-centred, culturally appropriate resources, services and support.
- Equip loved ones with the knowledge and skills they need to engage in appropriate self-care and minimise harm.
- Establish clear referral processes and pathways to and within the gambling help service system.
- Identify and address system-level barriers to accessing and benefitting from gambling help services.

An agile system equipped to identify, prevent and respond to emerging harm and need

- Partner with the regulator, help services and industry to create safer gambling environments.
- Contribute to local and national efforts to design and implement coordinated action to prevent and minimise gambling harm.
- Disseminate information and research to empower community participation in debate around gambling harm and decision-making at the local level.
- Fund and promote research to inform gambling harm prevention and minimisation policy, initiatives and decisions.

Six key projects

Office for Problem Gambling will implement six key projects under the investment plan – reflecting outcomes of its consultation process and consistent with new legislation.

New elements of each will be developed in each year of the plan.

1 **Deliver a mainstream communications campaign** that seeks to educate the community about gambling harm, raise awareness of the support available, and tackle stigma.

3 **Develop resources and support that meets the needs of loved ones** as allies in prevention and care.

5 **Trial a community-based program that offers an alternative to gambling** for at-risk groups.

2 **Partner with professional and amateur sporting clubs** to disrupt the normalisation of betting in sport.

4 **Break down barriers** to risky gamblers accessing and benefiting from treatment.

6 **Establish a Strategic Research Agenda** that helps to grow the evidence base for what works to prevent and minimise gambling harm in South Australia.

Contact us

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 problemgambling.sa.gov.au

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