

# Strategy for Gambling Harm Prevention in the ACT: Annual Work Plan (AWP) 2022-23 Key Achievements and Overview

## Strategy objectives

**Objective 1:** Ensuring Government policy and initiatives prevent and reduce gambling harm.

**Objective 2:** Increasing understanding about gambling harm amongst government, gambling industry, communities, families and individuals.

**Objective 3:** Providing a wide range of accessible, responsive and effective services and initiatives that prevent and reduce gambling harm.

**Objective 4:** Ensuring gambling environments and providers prevent and reduce gambling harm.

**Objective 5:** Supporting and building the evidence base for gambling harm prevention strategies and initiatives.

## Highlights and Achievements during 2022-23

### Communication & Engagement – Objectives 2 & 3

- i. The Commission commenced its 'Always On' communications approach during Gambling Harm Awareness Week (GHAW) 2022. This involved ongoing stakeholder engagement and two paid media plans covering a total period of 103 days. During this period there was an increased use of Gambling Help Online (GHO), national helpline services, website traffic and strong social media reach.
- ii. Strengthening the Commission's relationship with the community sector through successful implementation of the Community of Practice. Three meetings of the Community of Practice were held in 2022-23 with representatives from 23 community organisations.
- iii. Drawing on lived experience and those impacted by gambling harm, the Commission launched a new gambling harm communication initiative titled 'Every Story Matters' during GHAW 2022. Taking a partnership approach, printed and digital campaign materials were shared with industry and community sector stakeholders. This included the sharing of personal story videos for stakeholders to utilise and promote.

### ACT Gamblers Exclusion Database – Objectives 3,4 & 5

- iv. One of the biggest achievements for the Commission during 2022-23 was the delivery of a new centralised online Exclusion and Incident recording register for gambling Licensees. The updated ACT Gamblers Exclusion Database provides Licensees with a more patron centred approach to preventing gambling harm. It also provides an improved means for the Commission and Licensees to monitor and report on incident and exclusion trends over time.

### Training – Objectives 2 & 4

- v. The Commission funded Lifeline Canberra to develop and pilot a training program for staff in licensed gambling venues. The pilot involved staff from the Vikings Group and

aimed to provide staff the knowledge, skills and confidence to engage with patrons who are at risk of being impacted by gambling harm.

- vi. In 2022-23, 11 GCO training sessions were conducted by Wisdom Learning with a total of 124 participants.

#### **Research Projects – Objective 5**

- vii. Four research projects were funded and managed under the GHPMF:
  - **University of Canberra** - Understanding of gambling harm in the digital age which will inform an ACT gambling harm literacy strategy;
  - **ANU** - Harm profiles associated with low-risk gambling and transition between low-risk to other risk profiles;
  - **ANU** - The experiences of young people (aged 18 – 25) in the ACT and online gambling; and
  - **ATODA** - The intersections between gambling, alcohol and other drug use harms, as well as best practice approaches to treatment and harm reduction.

#### **Mid-term Strategy Evaluation – Objective 5**

- viii. An independent mid-term review of the Commission’s Strategy was completed by Crondar Consulting. The evaluation determined that the Strategy, with some modification to the objectives, is highly suitable to continue for the remaining two years and to form the basis of subsequent strategies. As part of this process, an outcomes framework was also developed providing the Commission with a means for monitoring the Strategy’s progress into the future.

#### **2024 ACT Gambling Survey – Objective 5**

- ix. Funds were secured through the 2023-24 budget process for the procurement of the 2024 ACT Gambling Survey.
- x. The procurement process also commenced; this included the development of the Statement of Requirements.

## **Challenges during 2022-23**

#### **Inconsistency between legislation and the public health approach**

- i. Current gambling legislation pre-dates the Commission’s adoption of a public health approach to gambling harm prevention. For example, the *Gambling and Racing Control (Code of Practice) Regulation 2002* (the Code) frequently refers to problem gambling but not gambling harm. Significant education initiatives have been implemented to explain the public health approach across licensed venues, the community and government, including training on how Gambling Contact Officers should apply this in their work. The mid-term evaluation of the Commission’s Strategy also recommended the Code be reviewed accordingly.

#### **Public engagement of people with lived experiences**

- i. Stigma is a primary barrier to help seeking and a reason why people impacted by gambling harm refrain from discussing their experiences. The impact of stigma was strongly evident throughout MIEACT’s “Voices of Gambling Harm” program where people were reluctant to volunteer and openly share their gambling harm lived experience stories.

## **Engagement with Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander communities**

- ii. Research has found that people in Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander communities experience more harm from gambling and are less likely to ask for help compared to people from other communities. The GaHP team have experienced difficulties engaging the Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander communities at a stakeholder level.

## **Funding processes for new initiatives**

- iii. Through the Gambling Harm Prevention and Mitigation Fund (GHPMF), the Commission funds a range of projects and research activities aimed at preventing and reducing gambling harm in the ACT. Applications for GHPMF funding are currently received on an ad-hoc basis throughout the year. This limits the Commission's ability to implement a competitive process to determine the relative merit of applications, and results in workload and planning difficulties for the GaHP team.

## **The need for new data**

- iv. ACT gambling harm prevention and reduction initiatives are currently informed by data from the 2019 ACT Gambling Survey. Since 2019, the gambling environment has been impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic and the rapid expansion of online gambling. Up to date information about the nature and impacts of gambling in the ACT is required to inform and monitor the impact of gambling harm prevention and reduction initiatives, including the targeting of priority audiences.

## **Key priorities for 2023-24**

### **1. Review of the *Gambling and Racing Control (Code of Practice) Regulation 2002 (the Code)* – Objective 1**

- i. The Commission will provide advice to relevant policy areas with regard to updating government legislation, policy and initiatives related to gambling harm, particularly alignment with the public health approach.

Note: The review has been included as an action in the 2023-24 AWP.

### **2. Explore Best Practice Approaches to Addressing Stigma – Objective 2**

- ii. While stigma continues to be a recurring barrier for preventing and reducing gambling harm in the ACT, the Commission will investigate best practice approaches to effectively reduce stigma.

Note: Exploring best practice approaches and addressing stigma have been included as an action under the 2023-24 AWP.

### **3. GHPMF – Grants Program**

- iii. In the second half of 2022-23 the GaHP team reviewed the application and assessment process for general and research projects under the GHPMF. As a result, the Commission will be initiating a Grants program to ensure a consistent and efficient approach to the administration of expenditure under the GHPMF.

Note: The restructure of the application process for the GHPMF through the introduction of a Grants Program is an identified action under the 2023-24 AWP

#### **4. Industry & Community Sector Training - Objective 2 & 3 & 4**

- iv. Outcomes from the Community of Practice discussions and from the ATODA research project have indicated a need for community sector training on gambling harm. The development and delivery of this training package will be a focus for the Commission in 2023-24.
- v. Following the successful development of the Lifeline training program in 2022-23 the Commission will work with Lifeline to deliver this training as an additional GCO training session option in 2023-24.
- vi. In the first half on 2023-24 the team will resume Club Board Member training.

#### **5. 2024 ACT Gambling Survey – Objective 5**

- vii. The Commission is committed to the conduct of a gambling prevalence survey every five years with the next survey data collection due in 2024. The survey will provide the evidence base for evaluating and developing initiatives addressing gambling behaviour and harm over time.

Note: The delivery of the 2024 Act Gambling Survey is an identified action under the 2023-24 AWP.