



ACT
Government



GAMBLING
AND
RACING
COMMISSION

ACT GAMBLING AND RACING COMMISSION

Review of the Gambling and Racing Control (Code of Practice) Regulation 2002

Discussion Paper

October 2012

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1. Introduction

1.1. Background

The ACT Gambling and Racing Commission (the Commission) was established in December 1999. The *Gambling and Racing Control Act 1999* (the Control Act) outlines the functions of the Commission which include:

- (a) promoting consumer protection;
- (b) minimising the possibility of criminal or unethical activity; and
- (c) reducing the risks and costs, to the community and to the individuals concerned, of problem gambling.

To assist in reducing the risks and costs of problem gambling, the Control Act requires the Commission to develop a Code of Practice for each gambling provider in the ACT. Following extensive public consultation, the Commission developed the *Gambling and Racing Control (Code of Practice) Regulations 2002* (the Code). The Code commenced on 1 December 2002 and was the first mandatory code of its kind in Australia. A copy of the Code is available for download from the ACT Legislation Register at www.legislation.act.gov.au or from any ACT gambling licensee.

The Code provides gambling licensees with a minimum set of standards that must be met in providing patrons access to their gambling products. It recognises that some people have difficulties controlling their gambling behaviour and that this may lead to harm experienced by the gambler themselves, their family and associates.

The Commission conducts audits and inspections to assess licensees' compliance with the Code as part of its ongoing audit program. On an industry level there is generally a high rate of statutory compliance with varying levels of enthusiasm in implementing the Code's requirements. However, since the Code's introduction in 2002 and subsequent review in 2004 a range of local and national research has been completed and a number of legislative changes in other jurisdictions have been implemented.

The Commission considers it now appropriate that the Code be reviewed to assess its continued effectiveness in light of recent research and evolving approaches in other jurisdictions. This decision is consistent with Recommendation 1 of the Auditor-General's April 2012 Report on *Monitoring and Minimising Harm Caused by Problem Gambling in the ACT*. The review of the Code of Practice will fulfil the Government's agreement to undertake such a review as outlined in the Auditor-General's recommendation.

As part of its functions under the Control Act, the Commission regularly reviews gaming laws. The purpose of this Discussion Paper is to seek feedback from stakeholders and the community which will then be used to inform the review of the Code of Practice.

2. Scope of the Review

This review will consider the ability of the Code of Practice in its present form to achieve its harm minimisation policy objectives. The Code does not focus specifically on the problem gambler but rather provides a range of measures that aim to minimise harm to all gamblers. The review will take into account the approaches used by other jurisdictions, changes in the industry and the now predominant public health approach to problem gambling.

While there is currently “no body of scientific evidence demonstrating consensus about the effectiveness of responsible gambling measures to prevent the incidence or reduce the prevalence of gambling-related harms”¹ the review will consider the research available to date.

The conduct of the review is consistent with the ACT Government’s commitments to regulatory reform under the Council of Australian Governments. These commitments recognise that effective regulation is essential to ensure markets operate efficiently and fairly and to protect consumers. However, the benefits from each regulation must not be offset by unduly high compliance and implementation costs or restrictions on competition.

The Commission will take into consideration the discussion and recommendations made in the Productivity Commission’s 2010 Report on Gambling where it appropriately informs this review.

The Commission encourages consideration and feedback on the topics contained in this paper or on any other issues relevant to the review or operation of the Code of Practice.

2.1. Consultation Process

Consultation with the community and industry will take place in two stages with each providing six weeks for any interested stakeholder to make a submission. The Commission is seeking feedback and comments from the community and industry on the appropriateness and effectiveness of the current framework of harm minimisation and consumer protection measures in the Code of Practice. In addition to the current

¹ Blaszczynski, A. Et al. 2011 ‘Responsible Gambling: General Principles and Minimal Requirements’, *Journal of Gambling Studies*, vol.27 p.567

Hayer, T., Meyer, G. 2011 ‘Self-Exclusion as a Harm Minimization Strategy: Evidence for the Casino Sector from Selected European Countries’, *Journal of Gambling Studies*, vol. 27 p.686

requirements, the Commission welcomes feedback on any other issues or measures that stakeholders consider pertinent to reducing the harms caused by problem gambling.

The submissions received, along with further information gathered from other jurisdictions, research and the Commission's own experience, will be considered in drafting a Policy Paper that will include recommendations. A second round of stakeholder consultation will occur on the draft Policy Paper. The Commission's final Policy Paper with recommendations will be developed following the second round of consultation and will be forwarded to the Minister for Gaming and Racing for consideration. Ultimately, it will be a matter for Government to decide whether the recommendations are adopted, modified or rejected and the Legislative Assembly to consider any legislative change.

2.2. [How to make a submission](#)

Submissions may be presented in hard copy or electronically. Electronic submissions are preferred. For accessibility reasons, please use Word or RTF format (an additional PDF version may also be submitted). Submissions must include a contact name and address. Anonymous submissions will not be considered.

Arrangements can be made to accept submissions from persons who are unable to express their views by any of these means.

The Commission will make submissions publicly available unless you specifically indicate that you would like all or part of your submission to remain confidential.

Email: grc@act.gov.au

Post: Chief Executive
ACT Gambling and Racing Commission
PO Box 214
CIVIC SQUARE ACT 2608

Inquiries: Inquiries can be directed to the review contact officer on 6207 0359.

[CLOSING DATE FOR SUBMISSIONS: COB Friday 14 December 2012](#)

3. Requirements by Licensee

The following table provides a summary of the current main requirements that apply to each licensee or gambling activity under the Code of Practice.

	Casino	Gaming Machine	Bookmakers	ACTTAB	Lotteries ²
Gambling Staff Training Requirements	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Gambling Contact Officers	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
General Requirements in Relation to Problem Gambling	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Staff Gambling Restrictions	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Exclusions	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
Location of Cash Facilities	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗
Cash Payment Limits	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Restrictions on Cashing Cheques	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗
Information Required in Gambling Venues	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Clocks and Lighting	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗
Advertising Restrictions	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Promotions and Inducements	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Player Reward Schemes	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗

² Lotteries licensees under the Code of Practice are defined as anyone authorised to conduct a lottery, scheme or competitions authorised under the *Lotteries Act 1964* or *Pool Betting Act 1964* other than a calcutta sweepstake, trade promotion (except where gambling is incorporated), raffle, progressive lottery or silver circle and an exempt lottery other than Housie.

4. Gambling Staff Training Requirements

Current Legislative Requirements³

The Code requires that all staff members who are directly involved in providing gambling services to patrons and each person who supervises those staff must successfully complete an approved training course every five years.

Discussion

The Commission has some concerns about the level of compliance with existing training requirements in relation to some gaming machine licensees. Staff providing gambling services without successfully completing training in the previous five years was, in 2009-10 and 2010-11, the most commonly recorded breach of the Code. Staff that have not undertaken refresher training may have forgotten key points raised in the training or may not be aware of new legislative requirements. This situation could lead to less than satisfactory gambling environments and further breaches of gaming laws.

Some feedback has been received that indicates that training every five years is too infrequent and may therefore be ineffective over this period. More frequent training would provide a reminder of the key points and keep harm minimisation concepts more topical for staff.

In April 2012 the ACT Auditor General's Office recommended that the Commission encourage licensees to ensure staff conduct refresher training every three years.

Stakeholder feedback sought

- 1. What is an appropriate length of time between training courses?**
- 2. Should the requirement to complete RSG training be broadened to apply to all venue staff?**

³ These requirements can be found under Schedule 1, s.1.4 & s.1.5 of the Code of Practice.

5. Gambling Contact Officers

Current Legislative Requirements⁴

Each gambling licensee must nominate at least one Gambling Contact Officer (GCO) who must have successfully completed an approved GCO training course within the previous five years. Although a GCO must be available, the Code does not require a GCO to be present at the facility at all times.

The GCO has several important functions and responsibilities under the Code of Practice, including:

- maintaining a record of a person's behavior that led the GCO to believing they have a gambling problem;
- acting on any information received that would lead the GCO to believe that a person may have a gambling problem;
- providing information about problem gambling and details of counselling services;
- providing self-exclusion to patrons who request it;

Discussion

Currently GCOs are required to complete approved training every five years. The question concerning the frequency of training needs to be addressed to ensure GCOs are up to date with current gaming laws and harm minimisation measures and practices.

In similar terms to staff training, more frequent training for GCOs could keep them better informed to perform this important role.

In addition, GCO information seminars and forums are being conducted by Mission Australia, as the current contracted provider of gambling support services in the ACT. Attending at least one of these forums each year may be a useful way to adjunct GCO training.

Stakeholder feedback sought

- 3. Should GCO training be required more frequently than the current five years, and if so, how often?**
- 4. Should GCOs be required to attend at least one approved GCO forum each year?**

⁴ These requirements can be found under Schedule 1, s.1.10 & s.1.11 of the Code of Practice.

6. Venue employee gambling restrictions

Current Legislative Requirements⁵

The Code recognises the possible actual or perceived conflict of interest that may result from venue staff gambling at their place of employment. The Code requires that staff must not take part in gambling at the venue where they are employed, or allow anyone else to take part on their behalf.

Discussion

While restricting gambling for venue staff is supported by research in gaming venues, the risk to staff may differ in the case of lotteries. Lotteries are a low intensity and low risk gambling product and staff at newsagencies that provide scratch tickets and lottery services may not be exposed to the same set of risk factors that are faced by other gambling venue staff. However, staff in lottery venues may be equally open to an actual or perceived conflict of interest. They may also be open to the temptations of gambling, such as 'instant reward' scratchies, and may purchase such products in an excessive manner or on credit hoping that a win will pay for their purchases.

Stakeholder feedback sought

- 5. Should the existing restrictions on staff participating in lottery gambling at their place of employment be relaxed?**

7. Exclusions

Current Legislative Requirements

The Code provides for two types of exclusions; licensee initiated exclusions and voluntary self initiated exclusions⁶. If a person is excluded from a venue, either by self exclusion or by a licensee exclusion, the licensee must prevent the excluded person from gambling at the facility.

Self exclusions

Self exclusion occurs when a person chooses to voluntarily exclude themselves from one or more gambling venues. A licensee, when asked by a person claiming to have a

⁵ These requirements can be found under Schedule 1, s1.4 (1) (a) (ii) the Code of Practice.

⁶ Regulations 1.12 to 1.20 of the Code deal with exclusions.

gambling problem, must sign a Deed of Exclusion with that person. This makes it compulsory for a licensee to exclude a person who no longer wishes to gamble at the venue.

The Deed may be made indefinitely or for a period of time nominated by the person self-excluding and agreed by the venue. There is no legislated minimum or maximum period and the Deed may be revoked by the person at any time.

Licensee initiated exclusions

The Code obligates a licensee to exclude a person from gambling at the licensee's facility if the licensee has reasonable grounds for believing that the welfare of the person, or any of the person's dependants, is seriously at risk because of the person's gambling problem. A person that is excluded from gambling by a gambling licensee is not permitted to utilise the licensee's gambling facilities and may be removed from or prevented from entering the licensee's gambling facility.

Discussion

A Deed of Exclusion ceases to apply when it expires or is revoked by the person who initiated the Deed. However, the Code does not currently require any specific action to be taken by a licensee when a Deed is revoked or expires. At the end of the period set out in the Deed, or once a Deed is revoked by the patron, the person is permitted by the Code to return to gambling at the nominated venues.

The Code requires that licensees provide information about counselling services to an excluded person. Some jurisdictions make it mandatory that a person attends a counselling session before being permitted to re-enter the venue at the end of their exclusion period.

Exclusions in the ACT under the Code do not have a minimum prescribed period. This is left for the licensee to decide on a case-by-case basis. Other jurisdictions do specify a minimum. In Tasmania for example the minimum period is six months and some New South Wales exclusion schemes provide minimum periods of six or twelve months.

The Commission is developing an ACT wide electronic database for recording and monitoring problem gambling related exclusions. It will be mandatory for all venues to utilise this system once it is operational. A number of changes to the Code of Practice will be required to support this new system which will be identified at a later stage in this review once the parameters and specifications of the system have been finalised. It is envisaged that these requirements will be incorporated into the draft Policy Paper and will be available for comment during the second stage of consultation.

Stakeholder feedback sought

- 6. Should an excluded person be required to attend at least one counselling session with the ACT's Gambling Counselling Service prior to re-entry into the venue at the end of their exclusion period?**
- 7. Should a minimum period of exclusion be introduced?**

8. General Requirements in Relation to Problem Gambling

Current Legislative Requirements⁷

The Code of Practice places several obligations on licensees in relation to problem gambling.

The key obligation requires licensees to keep a record of any incidents where a person shows signs of having a gambling problem or where an excluded person is identified in the gaming area of the facility. The details of the incident must be recorded as well as any action that was taken by staff. This provides an essential record or history with particular gamblers.

Licensees are also prohibited from encouraging a person to gamble beyond their means. Where a licensee is asked by a person about problem gambling, the licensee must take reasonable steps to give the person advice or information about available counselling services.

Additionally, Casino Canberra (the Casino) and gaming machine licensees must not allow a person to gamble if they do not appear to understand the consequences of gambling,

⁷ These requirements can be found under Schedule 1, s.1.3 & s.1.6 - s.1.8 of the Code of Practice.

the potential for financial loss or if they appear to be intoxicated or under the influence of a drug.

Discussion

The Code's general requirements about problem gambling place some responsibility upon licensees for consumer protection. These key measures aim to contribute towards a responsible gambling environment.

While the Commission recognises that venue staff may have a number of duties in addition to providing gambling services, its regulatory experience has shown that many venues do not recognise or record problem gambling incidents. It is accepted that some smaller venues may not have many (or perhaps any) incidents, however it is considered that there may be under-reporting in this area by many venues.

Is there a requirement for more training in this area? Do staff or GCO responsibilities need to be made clearer?

Stakeholder feedback sought

8. Should the increased use of the problem gambling Incident Report System be encouraged? If so, what is the best mechanism?
9. Is more training or education required in this area?

9. Cash Payment Limits

Current Legislative Requirements⁸

Limits on the amount of gambling winnings that may be paid to a gambler in cash are imposed under the Code. The limits are designed to restrict the amount of cash available to a punter in order to reduce the amount of winnings that are re-gambled at that time. Specifically, the Code prohibits the Casino from making cash payments of winnings greater than \$20,000 to an individual on any single gaming day. Cash payment limits also apply to other licensees (see below), however these limits relate to a particular event or contingency rather than a daily limit. For example, a race bookmaker is restricted in paying winnings greater than \$20,000 to a punter on a single race or event.

⁸ These requirements can be found under Schedule 1, s.1.22 & s.1.23 of the Code of Practice.

Type of Licensee	Maximum Cash Payable
Casino	\$20,000 (per day)
Bookmaker	\$20,000
ACTTAB	\$20,000
Lotteries	\$4,000
Gaming Machine	\$1,200
Housie	\$1,000
Keno	\$1,000

Where the payment limit is reached licensees are required to either pay the remaining balance by cheque or electronic funds transfer.

Discussion

The limits on paying winnings in cash have provided a safeguard to excessive spending over the last decade. However, due to inflation the limits on cash winnings in the ACT are, in real terms, around 30% lower now than when introduced⁹. Limits in other jurisdictions vary widely with the Productivity Commission recommending a limit at the lower end of the range (\$300) for gaming machines.

When the Code commenced in the ACT in 2002 the limit for gaming machines was \$1000 which was increased to \$1200 with the 2004 Code Review. Other cash limits have remained the same other than the Casino limit being applied to a gaming day rather than a 12 hour period.

Stakeholder feedback sought

10. Should the limits on the payment of winnings in cash be adjusted?

⁹ Reserve Bank of Australia inflation calculator: <http://www.rba.gov.au/calculator/annualDecimal.html>

10.Restrictions on Cashing Cheques

Current Legislative Requirements¹⁰

Under the Code of Practice a gaming machine licensee must not:

- cash a cheque within the gaming area;
- allow a patron to buy back a previously cashed personal cheque;
- cash a patron's personal cheque for more than \$250 on any day unless the patron has made arrangements with the licensee on a previous day; or
- cash any other form of cheque for the patron.

There are also restrictions under the *Casino Control Act 2006* and the *Casino Control Regulation 2006* in relation to how the Casino may cash a cheque.

Discussion

The restrictions on cashing cheques are designed to prevent gamblers from overspending by reducing access to additional cash sources and in some cases preventing credit betting where funds are not available to meet the cheque payment. However, over the past decade the use of cheques has declined by 60% in Australia¹¹. In the ACT, a number of venues no longer accept personal cheques. It is necessary to assess the continued application of the Code's cheque restrictions without creating a mechanism for gaining additional access to cash or credit as a 'spur of the moment' gambling decision.

Stakeholder feedback sought

- 11. Are all cheque cashing restrictions still necessary, and if so, what restrictions or limits should apply?**
- 12. Should there be a total prohibition on cashing all cheques or particular types of cheques, such as personal cheques?**

¹⁰ These requirements can be found under Schedule 1, s.1.24 of the Code of Practice, s.112, s.114 & s.115 of the *Casino Control Act 2006* and s.8 of the *Casino Control Regulation 2006*.

¹¹ Australian Payments Clearing Association, 2012 'The decline of cheques: Building a bridge to the digital economy'

11. Information Required in Gambling Venues

Current Legislative Requirements¹²

The Code of Practice requires that all gaming areas in the ACT display easily read signage stating that people under 18 years old and/or anyone intoxicated is prohibited from gambling.

A licensee of a gambling facility must also clearly make available information that tells people about:

- restrictions on cashing cheques (if any exist for the licence category);
- gambling limits (if any exist for the licence category); and
- the chances of winning major prizes at the facility.

A licensee must also provide information in a conspicuous way that tells people where each of the following can be found at the gambling facility:

- a copy of the rules for each kind of gambling offered by the licensee;
- information about exclusion programs from gambling;
- a Gambling Contact Officer for the facility;
- a copy of the Code of Practice; and
- information about gambling counselling services in the ACT.

In addition, gaming machine licensees are required to display warning notices on all gaming machines and at each gaming area entrance. Gaming machine licensees also have a number of harm minimisation obligations under the GMA.

Discussion

Static signs in gambling venues provide consumers with important warnings and information about gambling. While signs may not be effective at reaching all consumers, their cost of implementation is low. Signs must be displayed in a conspicuous way to make them effective.

Information overload or important information not provided in a conspicuous manner reduces the effectiveness of information intended to assist patrons in making informed gambling decisions.

¹² These requirements can be found under Schedule 1, s.1.25 of the Code of Practice, s.151 of *the Gaming Machine Act 2004* and Disallowable Instrument DI2004-184.

Stakeholder feedback sought

13. Are the Code's information requirements adequate? Are they sufficient or too much?

14. Should the Code prescribe minimum standards about size or placement to ensure information is conspicuous?

12.Clocks and Lighting

Current Legislative Requirements¹³

Under the Code of Practice, casino and gaming machine licensees must prominently display the correct time within all gambling areas.

The Code of Practice also requires that venues have sufficient lighting to allow clocks and signage within gambling areas to be easily read by patrons. There is no requirement for gaming areas to have natural lighting or to reach a prescribed minimum light level as there are in some jurisdictions.

Discussion

Incorporating wall clocks and adequate lighting in venues are among the national responsible gambling principles agreed to by the Ministerial Council on Gambling in July 2009. This measure provides a mechanism to ensure that gamblers can make informed decisions about their gambling.

Stakeholder feedback sought

15. Are the Code's clock and lighting requirements appropriate?

16. Should adequate lighting levels be quantified?

¹³ These requirements can be found under Schedule 1, s.1.26 & s.1.27 of the Code of Practice and s.152A of the *Gaming Machine Act 2004*.

13. Advertising Restrictions

Current Legislative Requirements¹⁴

Under the Code of Practice the licensee of a gambling facility must not publish advertising that:

- encourages anyone to contravene a gaming law;
- shows people under 25 years old gambling;
- encourages people under 18 years old to gamble, or targets them;
- is false or misleading, particularly about the chances of winning or the expected return to a gambler;
- suggests that gambling is a form of financial investment;
- suggests that skill can influence games that are games of chance;
- shows or promotes the consumption of alcohol while gambling;
- does not include the name and telephone number of the ACT gambling counselling service; or
- licensees must not send promotional material about gambling to an excluded person.

Furthermore, under the *Gaming Machine Act 2004* gaming machine licensees must ensure that there is no external signage advertising gaming machines or promoting a gambling activity at their venue.

Discussion

The Code's advertising requirements provide some fundamental restrictions on the advertising of gambling products in order to ensure that the advertising is not misleading and that high risk areas such as with underage persons or the association with alcohol are not an area of focus.

¹⁴ These requirements can be found under Schedule 1, s.1.20, s.1.28, s.1.29 & s.1.31 of the Code of Practice and s.152 of the *Gaming Machine Act 2004*.

Compliance with these requirements has in general been reasonable, however new forms of advertising online and through social media have emerged since the Code was developed.

Stakeholder feedback sought

17. Are the current advertising restrictions adequate? Should they be more prescriptive?

18. Should new or specific requirements be introduced in response to the rise of social media?

14. Promotions and Inducements

Current Legislative Requirements¹⁵

The ACT has specific restrictions on gambling promotions and inducements. Under the Code of Practice the licensee of a gambling facility must not conduct a promotion that:

- requires or encourages people to gamble at the facility for a minimum period of time to qualify for rewards;
- includes an offer of free or discounted alcohol; or
- requires or encourages people to gamble a minimum amount to qualify for rewards¹⁶.

All gambling promotional material must either include the rules and conditions of the promotion or advice on where that information is available. The rules and conditions to all promotions must be available for inspection at the licensee's facility.

¹⁵ These requirements can be found under Schedule 1, s.1.30, & s.1.31 of the Code of Practice.

¹⁶ This restriction does not apply to the promotion of a casino commission based player scheme, a gaming machine player reward scheme that is advertised only within the gambling facility or directly to members, sports bookmakers, lotteries licensees (as covered under the Code of Practice) as well as any promotion that requires or encourages the single lowest available bet and is not combined with or required to be made in addition to any other bet.

The Code of Practice has further restrictions for promotions and inducements conducted by gaming machine licensees. A gaming machine licensee must not:

- conduct a promotion that encourages people to increase their frequency of betting or the amount of each bet;
- induce people to gamble at the licensee's facility by offering:
 - free or discounted alcohol; or
 - cash or free or discounted gambling credits (unless the offer is made to all patrons in the facility all of the time as part of the facility's usual or regular prize schedule).

Discussion

There is a risk that inducements could encourage patrons to gamble more than they planned in order to achieve the offered reward. Experience indicates that a number of the existing requirements outlined in the code may be difficult to interpret as the provisions have been drafted in a fairly general manner. While these general requirements provide for greater licensee flexibility, more prescriptive requirements would make interpretation easier as there would be less 'grey' areas for uncertainty or dispute.

Stakeholder feedback sought

- 19. Is clarification of the Code's promotions and inducements requirement necessary?**
- 20. Should the requirements be more prescriptive to aid interpretation?**
- 21. If prizes or entries are gained by playing gaming machines, should it be mandatory that entries to promotions are available through alternate methods (eg. food purchase)**
- 22. Considering harm minimisation objectives, should promotions be able to offer cash prizes to those playing gaming machines? If so, what restrictions should be applied eg. maximum of \$500?**

15.Player Reward Schemes

Current Legislative Requirements¹⁷

Player reward schemes are programs available at clubs in which patrons are able to earn rewards by utilising a venue's facilities including gaming.

Player reward schemes are a type of promotion or inducement that aim to encourage a patron to use the facilities including the gaming machines. Similar to frequent flyer programs, player reward schemes can encourage people to not only attend the venue or site rather than some other venue but also to use the facilities, including gaming products, more frequently. More attractive the prizes strengthen the inducement or incentive to increase gambling activity.

Currently, player reward schemes must not:

- require or encourage people to gamble for a minimum period of time to qualify for rewards;
- include an offer of free or discounted alcohol; and
- encourage people to increase their frequency of betting at the facility or the amount of each bet (gaming machine licensees only).

Discussion

Since the development of the Code, other jurisdictions have moved to restrict player reward programs and advances in technology have allowed reward schemes to become integrated into club or external business activities.

¹⁷ These requirements can be found under Schedule 1, s.1.30 of the Code of Practice.

The conversion of points into goods or cash is the reward for 'loyal' activity including playing gaming machines. However there is a risk that player loyalty programs also encourage people to spend more than they had budgeted or planned rather than just encourage the same spend at a particular venue.

Stakeholder feedback sought

- 23. Do player loyalty schemes encourage players to spend more than they planned or budgeted for? If so, should restrictions be introduced to minimise this impact?**
- 24. Should restrictions be introduced on the value of prizes or rewards that can be offered including limitations or prohibitions on cash rewards?**
- 25. Should loyalty points accrued while playing gaming machines be able to be redeemed for rewards at external businesses?**

16. Service of Alcohol, Drink and Food in Gambling Areas

Current Legislative Requirements

While the Code requires that an intoxicated person must not be allowed to gamble it does not currently prohibit the service of food or beverages to a person while gambling on a gaming machine or at the casino.

A number of gaming machines in the ACT are currently equipped with drink service functionality which allows patrons to press a button and request drinks to be served to them while they are at a gaming machine. There is currently no restriction on this practice.

Discussion

There is significant concern that the service of refreshments, especially alcohol, to patrons while they are playing gaming machines or casino table games may encourage them to gamble for longer. Such service does not provide a short break in play which is a known harm minimisation strategy. Being served alcohol in this way may lead to the person becoming intoxicated while sitting at the machine and having minimal interaction with staff.

Some licensees have independently chosen not to allow food or beverage service in gaming areas.

Prohibiting the service of alcohol to patrons at a gaming machine is among the national responsible gambling principles agreed to by the Ministerial Council on Gambling in July 2009.

Stakeholder feedback sought

- 26. Is it appropriate for alcohol to be served to people playing gaming machines or table games?**
- 27. Should a prohibition on the service of food or drink while gambling at a gaming machine or table be introduced?**

17. Reserving Gaming Machines

Current Legislative Requirements

Gaming machine licensees are not restricted in allowing patrons to reserve gaming machines. It is common for clubs to allow machines to be reserved for a period of time, typically around 3 minutes, as a service to patrons having a small break from play.

Discussion

While reserving a machine provides a player with an opportunity to have a break in play, it may also provide a psychological commitment for the player to return. The typical reserve limit of 3 minutes also provides a sense of urgency for a player to return to the machine.

Stakeholder feedback sought

- 28. Should any restrictions be placed on a patron's ability to reserve a gaming machine?**