

Industry Newsletter: Gambling and Liquor

An update from ACT Gambling and Racing Commission and the ACT Commissioner for Fair Trading

The ACT Gambling and Racing Commission (the Commission) and ACT Commissioner for Fair Trading are pleased to present the second edition of our newsletter, where we explore key developments and priorities in the gambling and liquor industry. As regulators, our focus remains on promoting responsible practices, ensuring compliance, and safeguarding community wellbeing.

This edition arrives during a particularly active period, highlighted by the anticipated release of the Commission's Statement of Expectations 2025-26 and the [GRC 2025-26 Statement of Intent](#) along with the recently published Prevalence Survey 2024.

We also draw attention to the ongoing **Night-time Economy** reform, a significant initiative aimed at enhancing safety, vibrancy and sustainability in Canberra's night-time economy. This reform is a key area of focus for regulators, stakeholders, and the Minister, and we look forward to continued collaboration as it progresses.

In line with our commitment to proactive engagement, both the Commissioner for Fair Trading and the CEO of the Commission will attend the upcoming ClubsACT Mirco-Conference on Industry Compliance and Regulation: The Year Ahead and Beyond, scheduled for 19 August 2025.

These initiatives reflect our ongoing dedication to responsive, informed, and collaborative regulation – ensuring a safe, fair and responsible environment for all.

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Commissioner for Fair Trading

Giuseppe Mangeruca

CEO - ACT Gambling and Racing Commission

Poker machines – voluntary surrender scheme

Since our last newsletter, the voluntary surrender scheme for gaming machines in the ACT closed. As of 1 May 2025, the ACT successfully reduced the number of gaming machines in our community to 3494, exceeding the Government's target of 3500 or less.

The participation by gaming venues is greatly appreciated and we would like to take this opportunity to thank you for engaging with Access Canberra to achieve this milestone.

Changes to Diversification and Sustainability Support Fund

On 1 July 2025, changes to the Diversification and Sustainability Support Fund (DSSF) commenced suspending the requirement for Clubs to contribute to the DSSF for a period of 2 years until 30 June 2027.

It is important to note that no applications for grants from the DSSF will be accepted or assessed during this time.

On 14 July 2025, all Clubs were sent information regarding the changes and an updated Monthly Gaming Machine Return. The new form is also available on our website.

[Visit Gaming Machines - ACT Gambling and Racing Commission website](#)



NEW Night-time economy – making it easier to host events and reducing fees for liquor licensees

From 1 July 2025, liquor licensees with an occupancy loading between 151 and 350 people are eligible to apply for a **50% discount on their liquor licence fee**. The venues must meet the criteria and showcase artists, musicians or other cultural activities.

Annual liquor licence fees, since 1 July 2025, have also been **automatically reduced by 50%** for restaurants and cafés with occupancies between 81 and 150 people, and businesses with a General Licence with occupancies between 21 and 150 people.

This adds to the following existing initiatives:

- Offering live performances and events – eligible licensees with an occupancy loading up to 150 people can receive an **80% discount on**

their liquor licence fee. For eligibility, please visit [Reduction in Annual Licence Fee for Eligible Events](#)

- Hosting events in your venue – eligible licensees can apply for a free authorisation to extend their trading hours or change the floor plans of their premises with approval from a landlord up to 10 times per year to hold events. For eligibility, please visit [Licensee Events and Special Events Guidelines](#)
- Special event declarations – The Head of Access Canberra can now declare special events that automatically extend trading hours for licensed venues covered by the declaration. See a list of declared special events under the Regulations and Instruments tab on the [Legislation Register website](#)
- Free loading zone permits for musicians – musicians performing in your venues can apply for a **free 30-minute loading zone permit** to help with their set-ups. Please refer your musicians to apply at [Free loading zone permits for musicians](#)
- Reduced fees and longer standard hours for small venues – small restaurants and cafés, micro-bars and businesses with a General Licence with occupancies of up to 20 people had their annual liquor licence fees significantly reduced from 1 January 2024. Small restaurants and cafés with standard trading hours can now open until 2am at no additional cost – more information at [Liquor licensing reforms](#).

Applying for these initiatives is free and easy! For further information and access to application forms, please visit [Access Canberra Liquor Licences](#) and choose your topic from the list at the top of the page



Community Contributions Compliance Program

Following our previous newsletter, Authorised Officers from the Commission will soon begin contacting gaming machine licensees as part of the ongoing compliance program. These visits are intended to support licensees by providing education on the reporting obligations outlined in the Gaming Machine Act 2004 (the Gaming Machine Act), and to assess compliance with recordkeeping requirements.

To assist licensees in preparing for their next annual report, we've developed a fact sheet with relevant information. We encourage all licensees to review the information carefully and reach out to the Commission with any questions.

Further details on the Community Contributions Scheme, including a comprehensive Guideline and fact sheet.

Gambling Compliance Program overview

Access Canberra, on behalf of the Commission conducted the 2025 Gambling Harm Minimisation Program and engaged with all gaming machine licensees in the ACT. Licensees are commended for their positive engagement and cooperation with Inspectors throughout the compliance program, demonstrating a shared commitment to responsible gambling practices.

As part of the Commission's compliance program, Authorised Officers reviewed several key areas to assess how venues are meeting their obligations under the Gaming Machine Act 2004 and *Gambling and Racing Control (Code of Practice) Regulation 2002* (the Code).

This included evaluating venues' understanding and implementation of harm minimisation procedures, ensuring staff had completed approved training and

were equipped to identify and respond to signs of gambling harm (sections 1.4, 1.9, and 1.10 of the Code), and confirming that venues provided appropriate support and information to affected patrons (sections 1.8 and 1.11 of the Code). Officers also assessed venue design and signage to ensure compliance with standards in sections 1.25 and 1.26 of the Code and verified adherence to cash access restrictions under sections 153 and 153A of the Gaming Machine Act. In addition, 18% of all gaming machines in the ACT – totalling 620 units – were inspected to confirm they met legal compliance requirements.

Compliance findings

Overall, many licensees were compliant with legislative requirements. Inspectors liaised with licensees to focus on improving:

- gaming area signage
- adequate lighting in the gaming area
- display exclusion and support information in a clear and conspicuous manner to patrons
- gaming machine signage
- gaming machine Return to Player percentage, denomination, and note acceptor compliance.

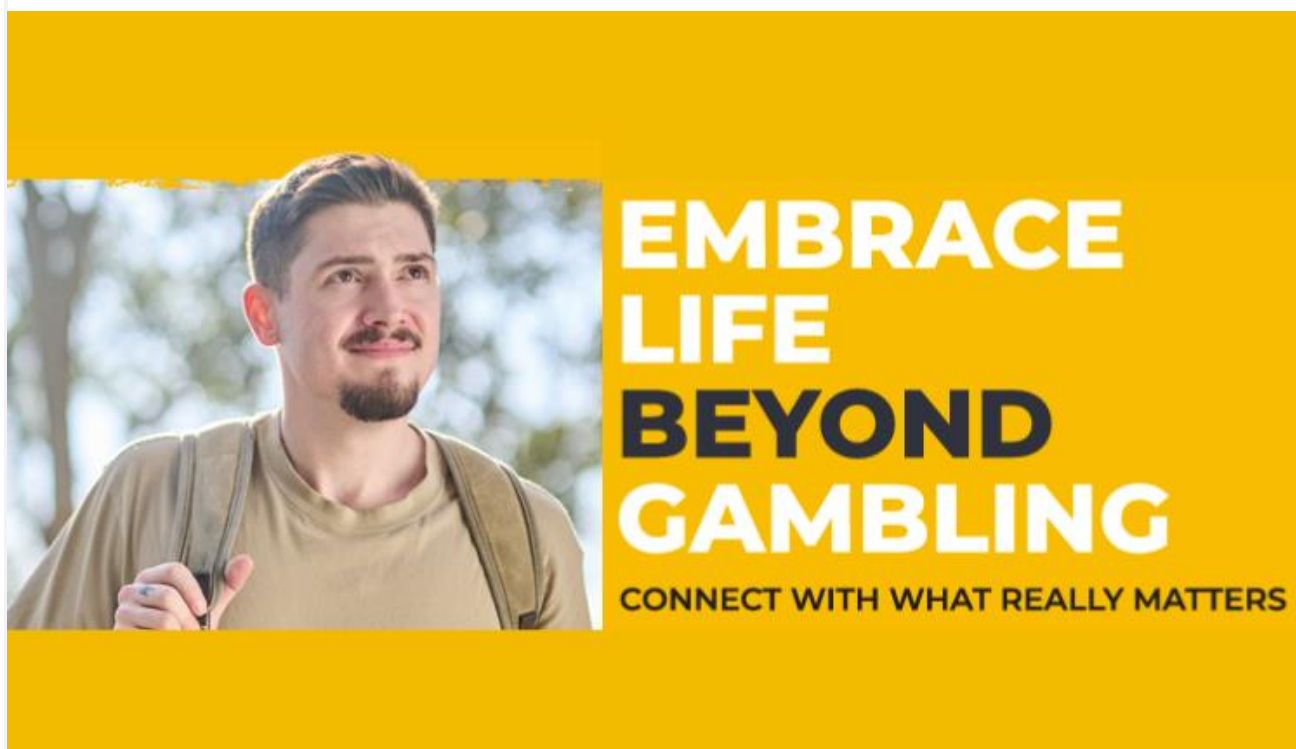
Industry insights

Most licensees had written procedures directing staff to report signs of gambling harm to the Gambling Contact Officer (GCO) and directing the GCO to submit a Gambling Incident Report and/or take reasonable steps to provide information and support to a patron demonstrating signs of gambling harm. This was a positive trend observed during the compliance program that the Commission believe is useful and assists staff to correctly report signs of gambling harm.

What next

Based on the findings of the program and licensee feedback, Access Canberra will run a second Gambling Harm Minimisation Program in 2025-26. The aim of the program is to draw on the findings from the 2024-25 program to focus on

areas of risk for gambling harm and support licensees with the clarity and resources required to meet their obligations confidently.



Gambling Harm Action Week 2025

In 2025, the Commission aims to lead a transformative conversation about gambling harm by moving from its annual Gambling Harm Awareness Week to Gambling Harm Action Week. This change recognises that gambling harm is a societal problem that requires concrete and collective action.

2025 dates and theme

Gambling Harm Action Week 2025 will be held from 20-26 October with the theme 'Let's change the conversation'. The week aims to encourage positive change in the way we talk and think about gambling harm, reducing stigma and encouraging help seeking. It also aims to showcase and celebrate the range of local initiatives that are contributing to gambling harm awareness, prevention and support.

How to get involved

To support stakeholders to contribute to Gambling Harm Action Week 2025, the Commission will again develop printed and electronic packs to share with clubs and other stakeholders in the weeks prior. The Commission's Gambling and Harm Prevention team will reach out to club contacts shortly to seek your input into what materials will work best for your venue.

Current campaign continues until 30 September 2025

The Commission's 'Let's connect with what really matters' campaign, launched in Gambling Harm Awareness Week 2024, will continue until 30 September 2025. Please visit the Commission's [Industry resource page](#) for materials to help you continue to promote this campaign during this time. This page will be updated with new campaign materials when ready, so please check back regularly.

For more information, contact the Gambling and Harm Prevention team at gamblingharmprevention@act.gov.au.

Acknowledgement of Country



We acknowledge the Ngunnawal people as traditional custodians of the ACT and recognise any other people or families with connection to the lands of the ACT and region. We acknowledge and respect their continuing culture and the contribution they make to the life of this city and this region.

You have received this email from the ACT Gambling and Racing Commission and the Commissioner for Fair Trading, as our records indicate you hold a current gaming machine and/or liquor licence. If you do not hold a current licence, or believe you have received this email in error,

please email us at: GamblingandRacing@act.gov.au to be [unsubscribed](#) from future communications