

Stakeholder consultation summary

Developing our Strategic Plan 2024-27

In March 2024 the Office of Responsible Gambling started consultation on its Strategic Plan for 2024-27. This summary provides an overview of how we consulted with stakeholders and people with lived experience, and what they told us.

How we engaged with our stakeholders

We ran an online survey, face-to-face workshops and held one-on-one meetings. We promoted the opportunity through emails, our newsletter and through phone calls.

We wanted to make sure we heard from as many organisations as possible, and that a range of views were represented.

Who we heard from

We heard from:

- GambleAware service providers
- organisations representing Aboriginal people, young people, veterans and people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities
- advocacy organisations focused on gambling harm prevention and minimisation
- researchers
- local government representatives
- organisations who have received grant funding from the Responsible Gambling Fund
- other Government agencies
- gambling industry operators and peak bodies.

What they told us

Overall, we heard strong support for our work. The feedback on our current plan was positive.

None of the feedback received suggested a need for significant departures from our current approach. There were no suggestions to stop any existing activities. There were also no significant gaps identified or suggestions made that were very different to our current activities. This suggested that we should focus on building on our existing work rather than adopting entirely new approaches.

The exception to this was in relation to our relationship with the gambling industry, and the relationship between industry and researchers, which is detailed below.

Stakeholders were particularly supportive of our awareness campaigns like the 'Number that Changed my Life' campaign, the 'Be Aware, Visit GambleAware' campaign and Reclaim the Game.

Although feedback on our campaigns was positive, we heard that we need to continue and increase our efforts to change attitudes towards gambling harm and raise awareness of services.

Stakeholders also recognised the opportunities that the changing gambling landscape and community support for reform may offer over the next three years. There was a strong consensus that we need to maintain the current momentum and focus on gambling harm.

The importance of integrated approaches was emphasised across all of our outcome areas. We heard that it is important to work within other settings, systems and projects, and that collaboration with other sectors and across Government will be crucial for success.



Research

The key themes relating to research were the need to:

- integrate gambling into other projects, including through co-funding arrangements with different sectors and by including gambling in non-gambling focused research
- support collaboration between different fields
- enable collaboration between researchers and industry in a way that is ethical and transparent
- support the independence of gambling research
- fund and disseminate research in a way that it can be directly applied
- continue funding research, including through the Gambling Research Capacity Grants.

Education and awareness

The key findings relating to education and awareness were that:

- campaigns have been effective but need to be more visible
- we need to continue to raise awareness of services and combat the stigma associated with gambling harm
- we need to develop resources for at-risk groups including young men, young people, and people from Aboriginal and culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

Services and support

The key feedback relating to services and support were that:

- the GambleAware service delivery model is having a positive impact
- having all services operating under the GambleAware branding and model has been more effective than the previous more fragmented Gambling Help model

- the existing funding for GambleAware community engagement roles would be more effective if they had access to more and better resources to promote services.

Leadership and influence

The key themes relating to leadership and influence were the importance of:

- integrating gambling in other sectors to increase their role in recognising and responding to gambling harm
- capitalising on changed community attitudes and expectations
- supporting and informing existing and future reform agendas.

Our work and the gambling industry

We heard that we need to maintain independence from the gambling industry, but also that there are benefits that could be realised from research that uses industry data, and more and better harm minimisation by the gambling industry.

There were two key challenges posed.

Firstly, the need for researchers to be able to access and use industry-held data, especially on player behaviour, in a way that does not compromise the integrity of the researcher or the resulting work. This data was seen as important for projects that test the effectiveness of consumer protection measures or the impact of different types of marketing, products or offers. Such projects are instigated by both researchers and by government and have the potential to inform more effective harm minimisation practice and policy.

Secondly, gambling companies identified that they need expert advice and the support of qualified researchers to design and evaluate their harm minimisation strategies, particularly proactive risk monitoring and intervention strategies which rely on the use of reliable and evidence-based indicators of risk of harm.

How we consulted with people with lived experience

We also worked with The Australian Centre for Social Innovation (TACSI) and Chat House to better understand the experiences of people with lived experience of gambling harm.

TACSI and Chat House conducted in-depth interviews with people with lived experience. They asked:

- what living with gambling harm looks like and what has changed in recent years
- what changes they like to see in the future
- how the NSW Government could support people earlier and better
- the role of community in preventing harm
- their experiences seeking help and what would encourage or stop them from doing so.

We heard from people from various age groups from regional and metropolitan NSW, including:

- people currently experiencing gambling harm
- people self-identifying as ‘problem gamblers’ according to their scores on the Problem Gambling Severity Index (PGSI)
- people currently or previously impacted by others gambling
- people from culturally and diverse backgrounds
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

The experiences and perspectives of the people interviewed were as diverse as they were unique, yet some shared themes emerged.

Living with gambling harm

People reported shifting between different types of gambling as a way of managing their addiction. They shared how gambling can be a social activity, entertainment, or an escape, and that reducing or quitting gambling can feel like a threat to a person’s lifestyle and happiness.

Overcoming gambling harm is a journey

People described how acknowledging a gambling problem often requires ‘hitting rock bottom’. They reported exploring a variety of avenues for change, including transitioning to familiar activities, reshaping harmful patterns, or finding purpose in supporting others. The significance of support from family and community was a consistent theme.

Stigma is a barrier to seeking help

Denial, normalisation of gambling, and fear of judgement were barriers to seeking help, as were negative experiences with services.

The people interviewed felt that stigma persists, and that negative community views lead to shame and secrecy among people experiencing gambling harm. The misunderstanding that gambling harm arises from a lack of self-control were seen to exacerbate this stigma.

Awareness of services was moderate

Although interviewees were aware of support services, they were often unclear about details.

Education, awareness, and proactive interventions were seen as essential. They also identified a need for holistic support.

Preventing gambling harm

People also shared their concerns about the normalisation of gambling, pervasive advertising and gambling industry approaches and practices. Some participants also questioned the government's willingness and ability to address gambling harm.

How we will use the feedback we received

We have gathered a wide range of ideas and feedback that will shape our strategy for the next three years and help the RGF Trust to effectively prioritise the funding and resources available for our work.

Some of the ideas and suggestions we received were high-level and are reflected in the plan.

Other feedback is of particular relevance to the more detailed plans that will help us bring the

strategic plan to life, such as our Research Agenda. There were also suggestions that were specific to particular projects or resources and that are already being actioned.

We want to continue to hear from and consult with our stakeholders, particularly those from the community, research and government sector so that we can respond to the needs of communities across NSW as they evolve and change, and to underpin effective, ethical and meaningful partnerships in our work.

The Office of Responsible Gambling

The Office of Responsible Gambling leads the development of responsible gambling strategy and public policy advice to the NSW Government.

The Office develops and implements programs and initiatives, as part of a strategic approach that supports responsible gambling and prevents and minimises the risk of gambling related harm in the community.

For further information

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