

Tuesday, 7 March 2023

Online gambling regulations failing to prevent gambling harm and poor mental health

The Australian Medical Association (AMA) has told a parliamentary inquiry into online gambling, current regulations and licensing regimes are ineffective and have failed to protect people from harm. It said an independent regulator is needed to co-ordinate a nationally consistent regulatory response.

Appearing before the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs, AMA President Professor Steve Robson expressed concern at the explosion of online gambling platforms and advertising and highlighted the increasing prevalence of related harm to mental health and wellbeing.

“The landscape of gambling has become much more complex and our regulations need to keep up. We’re now dealing with many more online gambling platforms and users, amid the entrenched commercial relationship between gambling and sport, ease of access to online gambling for under 18s, lax regulatory frameworks around advertising and rapidly evolving digital technology.

“The harms of gambling and addiction are far reaching in our society. As well being linked to comorbid mental health disorders and substance abuse, gambling harm can also cause family breakdowns, exacerbate domestic violence, cause financial distress and loss of employment and isolate people from support networks.

“Like all addictions – gambling needs to be understood as a health issue, free of stigma, with appropriate treatment and support offered by qualified health professionals.

“Advertising and marketing which targets children, young people and vulnerable people experiencing harm from gambling is absolutely unacceptable. Children and young people should not be gambling. It’s as simple as that.

“Almost ten years ago, the AMA called on the Commonwealth Government to establish an independent gambling regulator and that remains entirely relevant today. There has been little progress on gambling regulation over the intervening decade.

“Current regulations and licensing regimes for online gambling have been largely ineffective in helping harm minimisation and consumer protection efforts.”

Professor Robson encouraged the inquiry to make recommendations limiting exposure and access to online gambling, including:

- the establishment of an independent gambling regulator to provide national regulatory oversight,
- further research into online gambling prevalence, especially amongst children and young people,
- enhanced data collection and coordination at the national level to map the prevalence of online gambling and
- prohibit sports sponsorship by the gambling industry.

Read the [AMA’s submission](#):

The AMA’s position statement on the health effects of problem gambling is [here](#):

Contact: AMA Media: +61 427 209 753 | media@ama.com.au

Follow the AMA Media on Twitter: twitter.com/ama_media

Follow the AMA President on Twitter: twitter.com/amapresident

Like the AMA on Facebook facebook.com/AustralianMedicalAssociation