



AMA SA WARNS GAMBLING AD REFORM CANNOT WAIT

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The President of the Australian Medical Association in South Australia (AMA SA) Dr John Williams has expressed concern about the health impacts of the Australian Government's decision to delay vital gambling advertising reform.

Dr Williams and Flinders University gambling addiction experts Professor Michael Baigent and Professor Malcolm Battersby wrote to all members of the Australian and South Australian parliaments in September, asking for strong national action to ban gambling advertisements.

This week the Australian Government announced that it is shelving plans to rein in gambling advertising until 2025, more than a year and a half after a landmark parliamentary review into gambling harms.

'The Australian Government has been dragging its feet on gambling advertising reform for far too long. This latest delay is disappointing and worrying,' Dr Williams said.

'While the Australian public waits for action, gambling ads will continue to inflict harm on vulnerable members of our community, including children and young people who are especially susceptible to advertising messages that suggest winning is easy and gambling is a quick way to get rich.'

Recent research conducted by the Grattan Institute confirms Australians lose on average \$1,635 a year, much more than anywhere else in the world.

Professor Baigent said the need for regulation is urgent and cannot wait until 2025.

'The evidence is clear that this is a health issue for the Australian community - research clearly shows a significant relationship between gambling and suicide,' Prof Baigent said.

'The Government could minimise the health harms, and potentially save lives, by taking immediate steps to legislate a total ban on gambling advertising before the end of the parliamentary sitting year.'

'I wonder what is preventing the Government from doing what is needed to reduce the obvious gambling harms affecting the community.'

Federal Sports Minister Anika Wells has cited concerns about the impact of gambling advertising bans on the financial viability of national sporting organisations.

Professor Battersby said public health should be prioritised over the profits of major sporting codes that rake in huge profits.

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The AFL reported an underlying operating surplus of \$27.7 million in 2023. The NRL announced an operating surplus of \$58.2 million during the same period.

'I don't believe our children's health and wellbeing should be traded off to protect the AFL and NRL from potential financial losses,' Prof Battersby said.

'The human cost of failing to ban gambling advertising is far greater than any cost to big sporting businesses.

'We know gambling advertising exacerbates addiction. Addiction all too often leads to loss of relationships, divorce, loss of the family home, cultural harm and, in the worst cases, suicide.

'This is a public health emergency that requires immediate action. We cannot afford to wait any longer.'

For more information or interview requests please contact AMA SA Media and Communications Advisor Ben Terry on 0478 847 604.

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