

VICTORIAN
RESPONSIBLE
GAMBLING
FOUNDATION

OUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

2018

—

2021

*A Victoria free from
gambling-related harm*



FOREWORD

Every year, more than half-a-million Victorians experience some form of gambling harm. Further, for every individual who experiences severe gambling harm, up to six other people are affected, most often close family members and friends.

This represents a significant challenge, not just for individuals, but for discrete at-risk populations as well as the broader Victorian community.

In responding to this challenge, and in pursuing our vision of a Victorian free from gambling-related harm, the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation employs a public health approach.

That is, informed by a strong and growing evidence base, the Foundation's core business involves working in partnership with communities, government and industry to inform people about the risks of gambling harm; support activities that prevent social, health and economic harm from gambling; overcome stigma and other barriers to seeking support; and provide professional services to those affected by harm.

In this document, the Foundation is pleased to present our strategic priorities for the next three years and to share how we have translated them into cascading focus areas, actions and major initiatives.

Our Strategic Priorities: 2018–2021 consolidates the thinking behind the Foundation's work during our first five years and, guided by our values, seeks to build on our achievements through more specific, ambitious, and targeted priorities.

The aim is to increase the reach and effectiveness of our offering, and to enhance the health and wellbeing outcomes for Victorians at-risk of, or experiencing, gambling harm.

We look forward to delivering on this plan for all Victorians.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Julie Ligeti".

Julie Ligeti
Chair, Foundation Board



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Louise Glanville".

Louise Glanville
Chief Executive Officer

INTRODUCTION

The Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation was created by the Victorian Parliament under the *Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation Act 2011* specifically to address the challenge of gambling harm in the Victorian community. Administratively, the Foundation sits within the Justice and Regulation portfolio.

The Foundation is a statutory body that is funded by the Victorian government and governed by an independent board.

The board is responsible for providing strategic direction and ensuring the Foundation achieves its objectives and carries out its functions. The board is accountable to the Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation.

OUR STRATEGY

Our Strategic Priorities: 2018–2021 describes the Foundation's key focus areas, actions and major initiatives as we seek to achieve our vision of a Victoria free from gambling-related harm.

We thank our community and stakeholders for their feedback on our work and the input they have provided to support the development of this strategy.

OUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

1. **Prevent gambling harm through a public health approach**
2. **Work in partnership with those who share our vision to improve community health and wellbeing**
3. **Build a collaborative and respected centre of expertise to deliver our mission for all Victorians**

OUR VISION

A Victoria free from gambling-related harm.

OUR MISSION

To improve the health and wellbeing of Victorians by working with our communities and government to deliver effective, evidence-based initiatives and innovative approaches to prevent gambling harm and provide support for those seeking help.

OUR VALUES

The Foundation's values guide our actions, behaviours and the way we engage with each other and our stakeholders.

At all times, we aim to be:

RESPECTFUL: We are respectful, professional and constructive in the way we work together. We value people's time, perspectives, experiences and contributions.

ACCOUNTABLE: We are open, impartial and objective in our approach. We follow through on our commitments and are accountable for our actions and outcomes.

COLLABORATIVE: We seek out and support a broad range of contributors, collaborators and partners to inform our work and enhance our impact. We listen, are responsive and engage continuously – keeping stakeholders informed and involved as we progress.

INNOVATIVE: We work with our stakeholders, the community and our staff to lead the way on innovative strategies and programs to reduce gambling harm.

THE ENVIRONMENT IN WHICH WE WORK

While gambling is a legal and regulated industry in Victoria, research shows that more than half-a-million Victorians experience some form of harm every year from their gambling activities.

Harm can happen much earlier than people realise. Many of those affected are not regular gamblers and do not consider they are at risk. In some cases, gambling harm can be severe. For every individual who experiences severe gambling harm, up to six other people are affected, including family members and friends.

The social cost of gambling harm to Victoria is estimated to be \$7 billion a year. The highest costs are associated with family and relationship problems, followed by emotional and psychological issues, and financial losses, including bankruptcy.

Within our community, some groups are more at risk of gambling harm than others – young people, the socially isolated, people struggling with their mental health, those living in outer metropolitan, regional and rural areas, and Aboriginal and certain culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities.

Technological advances, online access, the convergence of gaming and gambling and the introduction of skill-based elements to existing products pose further challenges to preventing gambling harm.

The stigma attached to gambling harm means that those who are affected are often embarrassed, ashamed and reluctant to seek assistance.

Extensive support is available and it can work. The best results come from collaboration with government, community groups, health organisations, sporting clubs, secondary schools, counselling services, industry and – importantly – people affected by gambling harm.

FACTS

- Gambling is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week through venues, smartphones and gambling apps. Electronic gaming machines (pokies) remain the most harmful form of gambling, followed by wagering, table games and sports betting.
- There are more than 26,000 pokies machines in Victoria.
- Thirteen per cent of Victorians gamble regularly.
- Eighty-five per cent of gambling harm in Victoria arises from people engaging in low- or moderate-risk gambling.
- High-risk gambling accounts for 15 per cent of gambling harm in Victoria.
- The social cost of gambling harm to Victoria is estimated to be \$7 billion a year.
- For every dollar spent on raising awareness about gambling harm, a further \$30 is spent promoting gambling.
- The heavy promotion of betting, especially on sport, 'normalises' gambling without addressing the risks of gambling harm.



THE WORK WE DO

The Foundation exists to create a Victoria free from gambling-related harm. We take an integrated approach to this complex issue, working in partnership with those who share our vision. Research and the lived experience of gambling harm in our community inform our awareness, prevention, early intervention and support strategies. We work across Victoria – in metropolitan, regional and rural areas.

A public health approach

We recognise that gambling harm is a public health issue that needs a whole-of-community response. We take an integrated approach using the best available evidence to provide awareness, prevention, early intervention and support initiatives for individuals and communities.

Community engagement

The Foundation's public health approach is underpinned by a strong and growing evidence base and broad stakeholder engagement activities. We listen to feedback and advice from a range of sources, including people who have experienced gambling harm, local government, community and public health agencies, researchers, and industry.

Awareness and behaviour change

The Foundation leads influential communication and behaviour change programs to raise awareness of gambling harm and engage the Victorian community in harm prevention and reduction efforts.

Research and evaluation

The Foundation initiates and funds research and intelligence gathering on new products, emerging technologies, gambling challenges and trends to

guide the development of appropriate gambling harm prevention strategies. We evaluate the effectiveness of these strategies and share our findings widely for the benefit of our community. We assist in building the capacity of the research sector through our early career researcher and PhD grants.

Policy advice and information

We seek to influence policy, analyse trends, research and developments, and provide constructive advice to governments at local, state and national levels to enable them to make informed gambling-related decisions.

Prevention and early intervention

We work in partnership with communities, governments and industry to raise awareness and deliver innovative initiatives that prevent or reduce gambling harm and overcome stigma and other barriers to seeking support.

We are particularly focused on reaching groups that may be more at risk of gambling harm, such as young and older people, Aboriginal people, those in outer metropolitan, regional and rural areas and certain CALD communities. Among these groups, gambling can play a part in social connectedness and may offer a way of coping for people who have experienced grief or trauma. We support the development of early intervention programs and alternative social and recreational activities.

Support for people experiencing gambling harm

The Foundation funds a broad range of accessible support services across metropolitan, regional and rural Victoria, tailored to meet the specific needs of individuals and communities. These services are available to anyone in Victoria who experiences, or is at risk of experiencing, gambling harm. They include face-to-face counselling, online and self-help tools, email and chat counselling, financial counselling and peer-to-peer support.

Professional development and capacity building

The Foundation provides professional learning and development programs, resources and expertise to build capacity, deliver prevention and early intervention strategies and assist those who work with people affected by gambling harm. Our aim is to ensure all Victorians have access to the best possible support wherever they live.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1

PREVENT GAMBLING HARM THROUGH A PUBLIC HEALTH APPROACH

FOCUS	ACTIONS WE WILL TAKE
Create broad awareness and understanding that gambling harm is a public health issue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Engage with government to support the inclusion of gambling harm in the new Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan ■ Provide advice to all levels of government to assist in identifying and acting on sources of gambling harm
Build knowledge, expertise and the evidence base to constructively inform and influence gambling harm-related policies, practices and decisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Implement the Foundation's five-year research agenda ■ Update and release our gambling harm population study ■ Assist the regulator and relevant stakeholders to use research and knowledge about gambling harm in an optimal manner when making assessments, decisions or policy ■ Engage with stakeholders on policy and regulatory actions that could assist in preventing or reducing the risk of harm presented by pokies ■ Provide guidance regarding possible uses and actions that can be taken on the basis of the Foundation's research and policy program
Lead influential communication and behavioural change strategies that engage the Victorian community in preventing and reducing gambling harm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Develop and implement marketing campaigns such as 'Love the Game', 'We need to have the talk' and the 100 day challenge to positively influence behaviour ■ Implement Gambling Harm Awareness Week ■ Provide and support the distribution of materials that inform the public about sources and forms of gambling harm
Develop and implement gambling harm prevention strategies and initiatives focused on Aboriginal, CALD and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex populations; outer metropolitan, regional and rural communities; and settings such as in schools and at-risk workplaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Implement our gambling harm prevention framework ■ Undertake engagement and prevention activities in outer metropolitan communities ■ Develop a youth strategy ■ Implement our Reconciliation Action Plan and Aboriginal engagement strategy ■ Pilot an innovative and inclusive approach to research in Aboriginal communities, led by those communities ■ Evaluate progress against our statement of commitment to outer metropolitan, regional and rural Victorians
Identify, intervene early and support specific populations, communities and settings across Victoria that may be at risk of gambling harm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Review and identify opportunities to extend or replicate the Alfred Hospital's Gambler's Help support program ■ Work with Corrections Victoria and the Magistrates Court to support people in the justice system affected by gambling harm ■ Provide prevention and early intervention initiatives for gambling venue staff and those in the building and construction sector
Reduce the stigma associated with gambling harm to enhance inclusion of those affected within the community and encourage help seeking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Develop and implement a gambling stigma prevention/reduction strategy to support people with lived experience and strengthen community responsiveness
Deliver effective treatment and support for people and communities affected by gambling harm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Continue to support Gambler's Help services and build capacity among health and human services providers involved in identifying, and responding to, gambling harm ■ Increase the effectiveness of treatment and support through more flexible funding allocations to community organisations

Advice to governments

The Foundation uses research and evidence gathered from our prevention, early intervention and support activities to provide objective advice and input to guide government efforts to minimise gambling harm.

Gambling harm research

Each year, the Foundation awards about \$1 million to research grants and strategic research projects that seek to build knowledge of how gambling affects the Victorian community, better understand emerging trends, and inform strategies and activities to address harm. This work is guided by our *Research Agenda 2018–2022*, which was developed following extensive engagement with our stakeholders and partners. There are five research priorities: monitoring of gambling; harm; gambling products; gambling environments; and recovery and support.

Communication and behaviour change campaigns

The Foundation aims to influence community attitudes and behaviour in relation to gambling. We work to raise awareness about the risks of gambling, including those posed by new technologies; encourage early recognition of the signs of gambling harm; and reduce stigma and encourage people to seek support early, especially by empowering those who have experienced gambling harm to tell their stories. Important areas of focus include our annual Gambling Harm Awareness Week and work to interrupt the ‘normalisation’ of gambling.

Support for people experiencing gambling harm

The Foundation invests around \$18 million a year in professional support services for people experiencing gambling harm, their friends and families. More information about these services is available at gamblershelp.com.au.

Addressing stigma

The stigma associated with gambling harm can be a considerable barrier to help seeking. The Foundation is working with people with lived experience of gambling harm to develop a strategy to overcome stigma. Through open discussions about gambling harm and the sharing of lived experience, we aim to empower those affected to seek support.



STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2

WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THOSE WHO SHARE OUR VISION TO IMPROVE COMMUNITY HEALTH AND WELLBEING

FOCUS	ACTIONS WE WILL TAKE
Elevate the voices of people with lived experience of gambling harm to inform the work of the Foundation and our partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a Lived Experience Advisory Committee, which will focus initially on reducing stigma and improving accessibility of services
Extend our reach and impact through innovative, collaborative and effective partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to lead and support key partnerships including: the School Education and Sporting Club programs; the Gambler's Help Venue Support Program; our Libraries After Dark project; and our work with Aboriginal and CALD communities
Engage with governments and communities to better understand and address gambling harm as a contextual factor linked to other social issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhance our industry engagement and collaboration through proactive partnerships where there is mutual interest Implement our stakeholder engagement strategy Work with government departments and agencies on key social issues where gambling is a factor, including family violence, criminal justice, mental illness, and alcohol and drug misuse
Contribute to local, national and international efforts to prevent and reduce gambling harm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lead public presentations and discussions at key forums on strategic issues related to the Foundation's work Translate our research into knowledge and information to inform strategies to prevent and reduce gambling harm

Lived Experience Advisory Committee

The Foundation is establishing a Lived Experience Advisory Committee to ensure our programs and initiatives take into account, and are relevant and responsive to, the needs and challenges faced by people with direct experience of gambling harm.

Working with our community

We work collaboratively with health and community service professionals to ensure all Victorians, no matter where they live, can access support when, where and how they need it. Foundation-funded Gambler's Help services include telephone helplines, online self-help tools, online chat, email, face-to-face counselling and peer support.

Innovative prevention partnerships

Over the next three years, the Foundation will invest almost \$6 million in our Prevention Partnership Program, supporting a broad range of community-based not-for-profit, local government and

public health organisations to test new approaches to preventing or reducing gambling harm. These programs aim to raise awareness of harm and how to identify the early signs of harm. Specific funding is available for regional, rural and at-risk CALD communities.

- Our Sporting Club Program works with elite and community clubs to create healthy environments while reducing the exposure of young people to gambling, especially sports betting advertising. We encourage and support sporting clubs to reduce their reliance on gambling revenue and explore alternative income streams.
- Our School Education Program aims to help young people navigate the gambling environment. It has included professional development sessions and curriculum-based resources for teachers; workshops for senior students; and information and materials for parents. These resources are also available online. The program is currently being reviewed to make it more effective.

Engaging with venue workers

The Foundation funds the Gambler's Help Venue Support Program for people working in gambling venues throughout Victoria. The program aims to help venue workers to: identify and respond to patrons displaying signs of gambling harm; and raise awareness among venue staff about Gambler's Help services, self-exclusion programs and other community support services available to those at risk of, or experiencing, gambling harm. All gambling staff undergo mandatory training provided by the Foundation.

Exploring links between gambling harm and other social issues

The Foundation is working with our partners to explore the co-existence of gambling harm and other social issues – such as mental health issues, drug and alcohol misuse, relationship breakdown and family violence – and any relationship between them. The presence of these social issues may trigger an individual to engage in risky gambling behaviour or risky gambling may be compounded by one or more of these issues.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 3

BUILD A COLLABORATIVE AND RESPECTED CENTRE OF EXPERTISE TO DELIVER OUR MISSION FOR ALL VICTORIANS

FOCUS	ACTIONS WE WILL TAKE
Develop a strong, collaborative and values-led organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Further develop the Foundation's values and culture
Foster an environment of learning, knowledge sharing and innovation for our staff and stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct a successful biennial Gambling Harm Conference Provide ongoing professional development to build the capability of all those involved in preventing and reducing gambling harm
Build the leadership, engagement and research capability required to achieve our mission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide early career researcher grants that focus on gambling in at-risk populations Develop a PhD scholarship program to support gambling research
Enhance our governance, reporting and evaluative capability to more effectively demonstrate the impact and outcomes of our work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finalise and implement the Foundation's outcomes-focused reporting framework Complete and submit the Foundation's funding bid, including our agency evaluation, to the Expenditure Review Sub-Committee of the Victorian Parliament
Enable the Foundation's work through best practice corporate support functions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and implement a new digital strategy, including digital support tools and website features, to support individuals and communities affected by gambling harm Support staff through a refreshed intranet
Develop authentic, relevant and trusted relationships to represent and promote the work of the Foundation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build a better understanding among our stakeholders of areas of mutual interest and the role the Foundation plays in minimising harm from gambling for all Victorians Reposition the Foundation to strengthen and support our strategic priorities Implement our <i>Stakeholder Engagement Framework: 2018–2021</i> and identify opportunities for improvement

A values-led culture

The Foundation is focused on developing a culture in which our values guide our actions, behaviours and the way we engage with each other and our stakeholders at all times. We are respectful, accountable, collaborative and innovative.

Fostering learning and innovation

We work to strengthen the skills and capacity of people and organisations focused on addressing gambling harm at state, community and individual level. We do this through a range of forums, training programs and conferences that extend the breadth, depth and quality of services provided across Victoria. Our biennial Gambling Harm Conference is a flagship initiative designed to share leading practice and enhance overall sector capacity.

Building research capability

The Foundation supports the development of early career researchers in the field of gambling harm. This investment aims to ensure we have ongoing access to contemporary and innovative research to inform gambling harm prevention strategies.

Evaluating the effectiveness of our work

The Foundation is working with key partners to develop a comprehensive framework to assess the short-, medium- and long-term outcomes of our work. This framework will be shared and applied in our 2018–2019 annual report.

Building trusted relationships with our stakeholders

We work closely with our stakeholders to ensure they understand the Foundation's role and strategic priorities and have the opportunity to influence and guide our work. This approach is captured in our *Stakeholder Engagement Framework: 2018–2021*. We report the outcomes of our stakeholder engagement activities each year in our annual report.

DEMONSTRATING IMPACT AND OUTCOMES

The Foundation is developing a comprehensive framework to measure the impact and outcomes of our work with partners and key stakeholders across the community.

We will evaluate the effectiveness of our strategy using the following high level measures:

- engagement with the Foundation's face-to-face and digital help-seeking channels and resources

- participant satisfaction and outcomes achieved with support from our Gambler's Help services
- improved community awareness and understanding among at-risk communities of harms associated with gambling.

Together, we are working towards:

- a reduction in the number of Victorians experiencing harm from gambling
- a reduction in the social, health and economic cost of gambling harm across Victoria.

OUR STAKEHOLDERS

The Foundation will engage with any person or organisation interested in working towards a Victoria free from gambling-related harm.

We collaborate with a range of people and organisations to prevent and reduce gambling harm, and to provide support services that people throughout Victoria can access.

We engage in different ways depending on the purpose of the engagement and, importantly, the needs and preferences of individual groups.

At one end of the spectrum, engagement can be ensuring stakeholders are well informed about Foundation activities and outcomes. At the other, we may seek more direct input and enter into partnerships on issues of shared interest. The approach we use is determined by the purpose of the engagement, our role and responsibilities, and the issues to be considered.

The Foundation makes this commitment to our stakeholders:

When we work together, we promise to keep you informed, ask for your feedback, and consider your input before taking action. In return, we will support your efforts to reduce harm from gambling in Victoria.

Monitoring and evaluation of our engagement program forms part of our business planning processes. We share outcomes from these activities through the Foundation's regular communication channels and collectively via our annual report.

More detail on our approach and the stakeholders with whom we work is provided in the Foundation's *Stakeholder Engagement Framework: 2018–2021*.

Our stakeholders include:

- people affected by gambling harm
- members of the community with an interest in reducing harm from gambling
- our prevention program partners
- public health agencies
- Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations
- CALD organisations
- all levels of government, including ministers, regulators and local councils
- counsellors
- researchers
- gambling businesses
- adjacent industries (e.g. finance, media outlets)
- general practitioners, mental health workers, psychologists and psychiatrists
- sporting clubs
- schools and educators
- peak bodies
- journalists and commentators.



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