



Unwanted Noise – The need to ban Gambling Advertising

April 2024

It took years to rewire my brain to reclaim me and the life I should have been living. But the urge to gamble is still triggered by advertising images, sounds and pop-ups...I am one of the fortunate ones. I survived. I didn't lose everything, but I always carry the scar of the harm that it caused me. I always have to fight the "stupid, loser" voice in my head.

Testimony from a person harmed by gambling to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs, quoted on page 4 of their "You win some, you lose more" June 2023 report.

Gambling advertising seeks to maximise profits for online gambling corporations on the losses of people who too frequently cannot afford it. The advertising also harms children, creating an association between sports and gambling. Children aged 13 or younger have never seen an AFL game without gambling advertising.

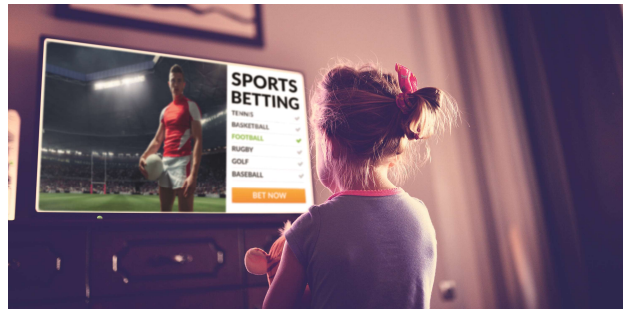
The online gambling corporations tripled their advertising spending from \$89.7 million to \$271.3 million between 2011 and 2020.

Research has found:

- Over 90% of children can recall seeing a sports betting advertisement.
- Many children have a detailed recall of betting advertisements' content – including brand names, plot lines, and 'deals'.
- Three-quarters of children aged 8 to 16 think betting on sport is normal and can name one or more sports betting companies because of all the sports gambling advertising they have been exposed to.
- 6% of children aged 12 to 17 have gambled online. Starting to gamble as a child increases the risk of being harmed due to gambling as an adult.

The harms caused by gambling include:

- Suicide;
- Relationship breakdown;
- Bankruptcy;
- Lowered productivity and job loss;
- Depression and anxiety; and
- Crime (especially fraud).



For every person harmed by gambling, the lives of several people will be impacted, including dependent children, spouses, anyone in their care, employers and work colleagues.

Throughout the Biblical text, including the Gospels, it is clear that God does not want people to exploit others for their benefit.

According to media reports, the Labor Government is considering a ban on gambling advertising, so now is the time to indicate our support for the reform. A spokesperson for the Minister for Communications told The Guardian newspaper in January 2024, "The status quo on online wagering advertising is untenable, and the government will announce a comprehensive response in due course."

The consideration follows an inquiry by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs into online gambling and its impacts on those experiencing gambling harm. The Labor chair of the Committee, the now deceased Peta Murphy, wrote in the final report of the Committee:



Online gambling companies advertise so much in Australia because it works. Online gambling has been deliberately and strategically marketed alongside sport, which has normalised it as a fun, harmless, and sociable activity that is part of a favourite pastime. Gambling advertising is grooming children and young people to gamble and encourages riskier behaviour. The torrent of advertising is inescapable. It is manipulating an impressionable and vulnerable audience to gamble online. Australia's largest professional sporting codes and broadcast media were largely in lockstep with their advertising and sponsorship partners in the gambling industry during this inquiry to oppose further restrictions.

The Committee shares the concerns of many witnesses and the community that the status quo is leading to a generation of young Australians who view gambling and sport as inextricably linked. This is concerning, not only because of the potential increase in Australians experiencing gambling harm, but also about changes to the culture of sport. Australia would be diminished if sport was to be so captured by gambling revenue that providing an opportunity for betting came to be seen as its primary purpose.

A phased, comprehensive ban on all gambling advertising on all media – broadcast and online, that leaves no room for circumvention, is needed. Partial bans on gambling advertising do not work. The 2017 media reforms resulted in gambling advertising on television increasing. Harmful industries have shown they will identify and capitalise on any gaps in marketing restrictions and that they are taking advantage of the less regulated online environment. The advertising ban should be enforced sequentially, with advertising that has the highest risk of harm to be addressed immediately. To enable sporting bodies and broadcasters adequate time to locate alternative sources of advertising revenue and to comply with current contractual obligations, the Committee recommends that the comprehensive ban be phased in over a three-year period.

What you can do:

Write polite and respectful letters to:

The Hon. Michelle Rowland MP

Minister for Communications
PO Box 6022
House of Representatives
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

The Hon. Anthony Albanese MP

Prime Minister
PO Box 6022
House of Representatives
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

E-mail: Minister.rowland@mo.communications.gov.au Salutation: Dear Prime Minister

Salutation: Dear Minister

Points to make in your letter:

- Express deep concern that gambling advertising increases the harms caused by online gambling and normalises the association between gambling and sports for children.
- Note that in Opposition, Labor indicated that it would ban gambling advertising.
- Urge that they follow through on the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs recommendation and implement a comprehensive ban on all forms of gambling advertising.