

BOOSTING COUNSELLING AND SUPPORT SERVICES

The Government is taking action to boost counselling services for problem gamblers.

We will deliver 50 new financial counsellors through the Australian Government's financial counselling network to work with problem gamblers and help them regain control over their finances. Many problem gamblers are in severe financial difficulty by the time they seek help, and financial counsellors can help them get back on their feet.

These financial counsellors will work closely with local pokies venues and state government gambling counselling services. We will provide \$26 million over four years to deliver these extra counsellors in local communities.

We will also provide an additional \$300,000 to expand the reach of Gambling Help Online (www.gamblinghelponline.org.au).

This funding will enable the website to increase access for family members of problem gamblers, introduce mobile phone functionality, and make the website more accessible for people with disability.

A recent evaluation of the website found that there was strong demand for increased online counselling and support.

Strengthening self-exclusion

The Government believes that self-exclusion arrangements are an important support for problem gamblers and their families.

We will work with the states and territories and industry to develop a nationally-consistent approach to self-exclusion, including better counselling support as part of the process, consideration of third party (family member) self-exclusions and more central oversight.

Self-exclusion will also be available through the pre-commitment system rolled out across Australia and will be a key part of the trial of mandatory pre-commitment in the ACT.

This will allow players to self-exclude anonymously and on a jurisdictional wide basis (in a mandatory system) and would not rely on venues monitoring the exclusions.

Improving staff training

Staff in clubs and pubs are often at the frontline in dealing with problem gambling. The Government believes that these employees are critical in identifying and supporting problem gamblers to seek professional help.

The role of gaming venue staff will be even more important under a pre-commitment system.

The Government will work with the states and territories to review and update responsible gambling training in all jurisdictions. This will include a particular focus on staff interaction with players in a pre-commitment system.

ATM withdrawal limits

The Commonwealth's gambling legislation will also introduce a \$250 per card daily ATM withdrawal limit in gaming venues (except casinos) from 1 February 2013.

The limit will not apply to EFTPOS facilities and venues in areas with limited banking facilities will be able to apply for an exemption.

The Productivity Commission found that 85 per cent of withdrawals in gaming venues are already under this limit.

This limit will not affect any State and Territory regulation that further restricts access to ATMs in gaming venues.