

Counselling Services

INTRODUCTION

The Australasian Casino Association (ACA) believes that responsible gambling occurs as a result of the collective actions and shared ownership by individuals, communities, the gambling industry and Government. It occurs in a regulated environment where people can make informed decisions about their participation and the extent of their gambling activities.

Our Australian members actively promote responsible gambling through a range of programs in their properties. Our members endeavour to identify and implement best practices in relation to the responsible service of gambling, taking into account their local jurisdiction's legislation, regulations and other relevant circumstances.

Counselling services are an important component of any responsible gambling policy. Currently, treatment of "problem gamblers" and support for their families and friends may be provided by a range of service providers including:

- Psychiatrists, psychologists, medical practitioners;
- Government-funded organisations such as G-Line and Gambler's Help;
- Industry-funded counselling services (eg NSW BetSafe);
- Church and welfare service organisations, such as Wesley Mission;
- Social workers and financial counselors;
- Voluntary groups – such as Gambler Anonymous; and
- Some specialist private hospitals

In all instances, our members have developed protocols with accredited problem gambling service providers. These protocols include such arrangements as:

- The provision of contact information to persons seeking such information;
- Referral of persons seeking self-exclusion (as part of the self-exclusion process) or seeking assistance to such accredited problem gambling service providers; and
- Where permission is given, contact with problem gambling services.
- To achieve positive outcomes for patrons in this area, it is essential that problem gambling counselling services, especially the government-funded programs, be as efficient and effective as possible.

OUR POSITION

The ACA supports:

- An expanded and improved counselling service that is national in scope, available on a 24 hour 7 days a week basis and that is culturally sensitive in its delivery.
- A national system of accreditation for problem gambling service providers. This accreditation should be introduced in a staged program and should be a condition of ongoing funding for

service providers. Minimum standards should be a priority and incorporated into any accreditation program.

- A coordinated program that delivers a multi disciplined service that operates under a dedicated service name or brand that provides a clear identification to the target group.
- A comprehensive national data set should be developed and be used as a tool that is utilised by problem gambling service providers as well as being a means of providing feedback to counselling services, industry and the community on a regular basis.

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