St Vincent de Paul Society
NATIONAL COUNCIL of AUSTRALIA Inc.
good works

7 July 2026

Senate Standing Committees on Environment and Communications
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Committee Secretary,

RE: INTERACTIVE GAMBLING AMENDMENT (GAMBLING REFORM) BILL 2026

The St Vincent de Paul Society (the Society) welcomes the opportunity to make this submission on the Interactive Gambling Amendment (Gambling Reform) Bill 2026 (the Bill). The Society has advocated for gambling reform since 2010 and is a member of the Alliance for Gambling Reform. Most importantly, our members and staff witness first-hand how gambling harm leaves households without resources for food, rent and bills, and we call on the Senate to strengthen this Bill to match the scale of the harm.

The scale of the problem

Australia has the highest per capita gambling losses in the world — $36 billion annually in the 12 months to March 2026, or $1,635 per adult.[1] Since the Murphy Review handed its report to the Australian Government three years ago, Australians have lost more than $104.8 billion to gambling — equivalent to $95.2 million every day that reform is delayed.[2] Seventy-nine per cent of Australians want gambling advertisements banned.[3] The number of Australians betting on sports has doubled in five years.[4] Almost 900,000 Australians who sports bet are at risk of gambling harm, with 56 per cent of at-risk gamblers suffering mental health concerns, 41 per cent suffering anxiety, and almost 20 per cent of suicides in Australia attributed to gambling-related causes.[5]

Harm to children and young people

Last year, 600,000 children and young people gambled and lost almost $20 million, despite it being illegal.[6] Almost one in three Australian teenagers gambles, and more children were gambling on sport last year than playing soccer and basketball combined. Eighty per cent of children know the odds, jingles and logos of sports betting companies. New Alliance for Gambling Reform research with 200 Victorian 18- and 19-year-olds in June 2026 found gambling is highly visible, accessible and embedded in young people's social environments, and normalised before the age of 18.[7]

The Government's own Impact Analysis acknowledges advertising's effectiveness in raising awareness for brand and products and wagering advertisements are no different.[8] Research shows that the greatest impact on betting behaviour among young people (18-34 years) and at-risk gamblers was exposure to wagering advertising. Such exposure resulted in half of those at risk of gambling harm increasing their betting, 28 per cent changing their bets or trying a new form of betting and 29 per cent betting on impulse.[9]

The Society is particularly concerned that children and young people are repeatedly exposed to gambling advertising that normalises gambling behaviour.

Acknowledgement of progress

The Society acknowledges the Australian Government has taken some positive steps. The Bill introduces restrictions on broadcast gambling advertising, radio blackouts around school times, and begins to

decouple gambling from sport through phased restrictions on jersey and stadium branding. The $39 million announced in the 2026 Budget for specialist financial counselling is also welcomed. However, greater reforms are needed.

Where the Bill does not go far enough

A cap is not a ban. The Bill reduces gambling advertising to a maximum of three advertisements per hour on broadcast television between 6:00 am and 8:30 pm, rather than implementing the total ban recommended by the 2023 Parliamentary Report, *You Win Some, You Lose More*. That Report found that partial bans fail: the 2017 broadcast reforms actually increased gambling advertising on television,[10] and the Grattan Institute found the same result when partial bans were introduced in 2018.[11] The Society's preference is for a total phase-out of gambling advertising over three years, consistent with Report recommendation 26.

The 8:30 pm cut-off exposes children. Gambling advertising is unrestricted after 8:30 pm, yet live sport regularly begins at 8:00 pm on free-to-air television. Children watching evening sporting events remain exposed to gambling advertising at the very times they are most likely to be viewing.

The opt-out model does not work. The Bill requires online users to opt out of gambling advertising rather than opt in. The Society notes that many users never change default settings. SBS introduced an opt-out feature for gambling advertising on its streaming service nearly two years ago, and only 0.2 per cent of active subscribers have used it.[12] The Society's preference is for an opt-in model, placing responsibility on operators rather than on individuals and families.

Online advertising is not banned. The Bill does not prohibit online gambling advertising. In its own regulatory impact analysis prepared alongside the April 2026 announcement of these reforms,[13] the Australian Government assessed that a full advertising ban would deliver twice the net public benefit of the partial measures it chose to implement but noted it would impose a greater financial burden on media and sporting codes. The Society considers that community wellbeing must take precedence over industry revenue.

No ban on inducements. The Bill does not ban gambling inducements. The 2023 Parliamentary Report found that "banning inducements and inducement advertising is a key measure for reducing online gambling harm." Betting companies target people at high risk through tailored inducements — refund offers, bonus bets and sign-up bonuses — that encourage riskier gambling and lead to greater losses. The industry's business model exploits the 12.7 per cent of gamblers who contribute almost half of all gambling revenue.[14]

No national regulator. Australia has the highest per capita gambling losses in the world, yet no national online gambling regulator, and the Bill does not establish one. The Society supports the Murphy Report's recommendation that a single, well-resourced national online gambling regulator be established, along with a dedicated federal minister responsible for online gambling harm reduction.

No harm-reduction levy. The Bill does not impose a harm reduction levy on wagering service providers which could be used to fund harm-reduction programs, treatment and support for people experiencing gambling harms.

Gambling is not treated as a public health issue. The Bill does not implement the 2023 Parliamentary Report's recommendation that gambling harm be treated as a public health issue. No federal or state department currently takes responsibility for gambling harm. The Society calls for a national strategy that treats gambling harm as a health issue, with adequate resourcing for prevention, treatment and support.

Our calls on the Australian Government

1. **Implement all 31 recommendations of the 2023 Parliamentary Report** — especially the total phase-out of gambling advertising over three years (recommendation 26) and the ban on gambling inducements (recommendation 16), with exemptions for dedicated racing channels and community radio.
2. **Replace the opt-out model with opt-in** — online gambling advertising should default to off, and users who wish to receive it should be required to actively choose to do so.

3. **Remove the 8:30 pm exemption** — gambling advertising during live sport should be prohibited at all times of day, not only before 8:30 pm, because children are present in evening sporting audiences.
4. **Ban gambling inducements immediately** — refund offers, bonus bets, sign-up bonuses and all other inducements should be prohibited without delay, consistent with the 2023 Parliamentary Report.
5. **Establish a national online gambling regulator** — a single, well-resourced national regulator with full-time staff and clear enforcement powers is essential given Australia's scale of gambling harm.
6. **Appoint a federal minister and adopt a public health framework** — a single minister responsible for online gambling harm reduction should be appointed, supported by a national strategy and improved data collection.
7. **Implement mandatory pre-commitment with loss limits** — mandatory pre-commitment systems across all online gambling and poker machines, as recommended by the Grattan Institute, should be introduced as a baseline consumer protection.
8. **Introduce a harm reduction levy on Wagering Service Providers** — to fund treatment, counselling, research and public education proportionate to the scale of harm.

Conclusion

The St Vincent de Paul Society calls on the Senate to strengthen the Interactive Gambling Amendment (Gambling Reform) Bill 2026 so that it reflects the evidence, the recommendations of the 2023 Parliamentary Report, and the needs of the communities we serve. Australia's regulatory system must stop placing responsibility on individuals to resist addictive products while absolving the industry of harm.

The Society sees first-hand the financial, psychological, health, relationship and legal devastation that excessive gambling causes to households, families and communities across Australia. Australians are losing $36 billion annually to gambling — more per person than any other nation in the world. Every day without comprehensive reform costs a further $95.2 million. The 2023 Parliamentary Report, the weight of evidence, and 79 per cent of the Australian public all point in the same direction: stronger action is needed now.

Please do not hesitate to contact if you require further information.

Yours sincerely,

Toby oConnor

Chief Executive Officer

[1]The Australia Institute. *The National Gambling Toll Live Tracker*. Accessed at: https://gambling-toll.australiainstitute.org.au/.

[2] ibid.

[3] The Australia Institute. 11 May 2026. *Polling – banning gambling advertisements - The Australia Institute*. Accessed at: https://australiainstitute.org.au/report/polling-banning-gambling-advertising/

[4] Alliance for Gambling Reform. 25 June 2024. *Explosion in sports betting puts a generation at risk – Up to 1 in 5 young sports bettors now have a gambling problem*, News Hub. Accessed at: https://newshub.medianet.com.au/2024/06/explosion-in-sports-betting-puts-a-generation-at-risk-up-to-1-in-5-young-sports-bettors-now-have-a-gambling-problem/54562/

[5] Alliance for Gambling Reform. 30 July 2024. *Gambling industry makes almost half its revenue from just 12% of all gamblers – New data shows industry preys on those who can't afford their losses,* News Hub. Accessed at: https://newshub.medianet.com.au/2024/07/gambling-industry-makes-almost-half-its-revenue-from-just-12-of-all-gamblers-new-data-shows-industry-preys-on-those-who-cant-afford-their-losses/59478/

[6] Alliance for Gambling Reform.1 July 2026. *Gambling reforms being rammed through parliament – while kids are being groomed to gamble.* Accessed at: https://www.agr.org.au/news/gambling-reforms-being-rammed-through-parliament---while-kids-are-being-groomed-to-gamble)

[7] Alliance for Gambling Reform. 30 June 2026. *The gambling industry is targeting your children - how, why and what can be done?* - ABC listen. Accessed at: https://www.abc.net.au/listen/programs/bigideas/gambling-industry-targets-young-australians/106783778

[8] Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts, April 2026. *Wagering Advertising Reform, Impact Analysis.* Accessed at: https://oia.pmc.gov.au/published-impact-analyses-and-reports/wagering-advertising-reforms. p.7

[9] ibid., with reference to AIFS research: R Jenkinson, CM Boyle, K Sakata, N Greer, U Jatkar and B Vandenberg. 2023. *Exposure and Impact of Sports and Race Betting Advertising in Australia*. Australian Gambling Research Centre. Australian Institute of Family Studies; and Jenkinson et al., *Exposure and Impact of Sports and Race Betting Advertising in Australia.* Australian Gambling Research Centre. Australian Institute of Family Studies.

[10] Parliament of Australia. House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs. June 2023. Y*ou win some, you lose more*. Accessed at: https://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/committees/reportrep/RB000159/toc_pdf/Youwinsome,youlosemore.pdf, p.iv.

[11] Griffiths. K., Sathanapally, A., Baldwin, E., 4 September 2024. *Gambling is causing great harm - Grattan Institute*. Accessed at: https://grattan.edu.au/news/gambling-is-causing-great-harm/

[12] TVTonight. 7 November 2024. *SBS on Demand users opting out of Gambling ads.* Accessed at: https://tvtonight.com.au/2024/11/sbs-on-demand-users-opting-out-of-gambling-ads.html

[13] Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts. op.cit.

[14] Alliance for Gambling Reform. 30 July 2024. op.cit.