

As Australians are losing an estimated [\\$25 billion a year](#) through betting, advertisements from Australia's gambling industry have been facing scrutiny. Exposure to betting advertising has been linked to increased gambling behaviour.

According to a [recent study](#) conducted by the Australian Gambling Research Centre (AGRC), 34 per cent of Australians increase their betting after being exposed to wagering advertising. In addition, 29 per cent place bets on impulse after exposure to gambling promotions and 28 per cent either change what they bet on or try new forms of betting.

Dr Angela Rintoul, Senior Research Fellow at Monash University, says the gambling industry's "questionable and even predatory" tactics are luring Australians into placing bets.

"We've got an industry that's making people spend excessively, whether that's by sending them bonus bets or encouraging them to remain at a poker machine beyond a usual break time like a lunch break," according to Dr Rintoul.

Sports betting agencies have played a prominent role in the promotion of gambling, [spending more than \\$287 million](#) advertising their products in 2021. Dr Rintoul believes the influence of these agencies is "changing the sporting landscape in Australia".

"There are direct sports ads through radio and TV, there are logos that sports players have on their shirts, there's also the promotion of gambling by particular sporting bureaus through connections with betting agencies," she says.

Dr Rintoul says there is a "less obvious promotion" where sports commentators "talk about the odds being offered by particular wagering companies during the match" and "normalise the investment in sport" instead of "enjoying the thrill and the skill of the competition".

Many Australians want to see stricter regulations on gambling advertising. [AGRC found](#) that 53 per cent support a ban on advertisements before 10:30pm and 47 per cent want a ban on betting advertising across all social media platforms.

The desire for regulations stems from the negative mental health impacts of gambling advertisements. Ian, a former gambler and a gambling support volunteer, says advertisements are harmful for those who are making an effort to overcome gambling addiction.

"I'm no longer a gambler and I haven't been since 2014, but those ads are really annoying to me," Ian says. "For someone who's trying to recover from gambling harm this is probably one of the worst things that they can see."

Ian has "done some study on the brain" and has found that exposure is "very dangerous to those who are in a vulnerable state" and is "detrimental to those who do gamble and those who are recovering".

There have recently been measures put in place to address the dangers of gambling advertising. The Federal Government has expressed its plan to [launch BetStop](#), a national gambling self-exclusion register aimed at allowing people to exclude themselves from all Australian licensed online and phone wagering services for a minimum of three months.

In addition, the government has announced it will make it [illegal for betting companies to permit people to use credit cards while gambling online](#). This policy is intended to protect vulnerable Australians by limiting their exposure to gambling products.

Ian is confident that the ban on credit card use will play a role in supporting people who have been affected by online gambling.

"I run a peer support group for people who have suffered gambling and online gambling has become prominent over the past three or four years," he says. "People who gamble online not only lose their own money but incur very large debts, so the introduction of banning the use of credit cards is definitely a step in the right direction."

But there are some doubts as to whether the ban will completely mitigate gambling harm. Dr Charles Livingstone, a senior lecturer in the School of Public Health and Preventative Medicine at Monash University, says it "unfortunately won't be a cure".

"Once you start betting with credit you're in a really serious spiral and if you can't actually do that then there's a reasonable chance you might be able to organise your affairs and get on top of the habit, so that's a really big step," he says. "But it's probably not going to have a lot of help for those who are already in diabolical trouble."

Dr Livingstone believes more focus on mental health services will be a helpful way to support Australians who are struggling with gambling addiction. "We need mental health professions and GPs to understand the impact of gambling advertising on people's mental health and understand what can be done to assist them," he says.

These sorts of people "don't all have to become gambling councillors" but should still "point vulnerable people in the right direction to get assistance", according to Dr Livingstone.