

Nat Cook MP Minister for Human Services

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Keep thrill of the Games on the sport, not the bet

Cheering loudly for the Boomers, the Matildas and the Hockeyroos in their bid for gold is how the State Government is encouraging sports lovers to enjoy the 2024 Olympic Games – not by betting on our Aussie heroes.

Experts are predicting an uptick in sports betting throughout the Paris Olympics, in line with growing participation in sports betting in South Australia – up from 36 per cent in 2021 to 41 per cent in 2023.

South Australians lost more than \$424 million on sports betting, racing and novelty bets in 2022-23, a figure that has almost doubled in the past five years.

Concerningly, most children and young people today have never watched sport without hearing about the odds and almost 30 per cent of kids have gambled before the age of 18.

Research shows that consistent and targeted marketing campaigns by betting agencies as well as 24-hour access to gambling via online platforms has helped normalise betting in sport and can explain growing participation rates.

While gambling advertisements cannot be played during live sports broadcasts, sports betting companies are able to freely target specific markets via social media and direct marketing for example.

Here for the Game is an initiative of the State Government's Office for Problem Gambling that seeks to disrupt the normalisation of gambling in sport.

Five professional sports clubs have joined the cause – saying no to sports betting sponsorships and promoting the benefits of sport without gambling: Adelaide United Football Club (Soccer), Adelaide Crows (AFL), Adelaide 36ers (Basketball), Adelaide Thunderbirds (Netball), and Adelaide Giants (Baseball). Ambassadors from each of these clubs feature in advertising, such as the latest Spoil Sport campaign.

More than 50 community clubs have also signed onto the Here For the Game Community Program, which is being delivered by the Alcohol and Drug Foundation and is supported by a \$1 million State Government funding investment over four

years. The Here For The Game Community Program is an accreditation program for local sports clubs to tackle the growing presence of harmful sports betting and gambling in the community.

Clubs can find out more about the program at www.hereforthe game.com.au

Quotes attributable to Nat Cook

There is so much excitement and build up to the Olympic Games as we ready ourselves to cheer on the Aussie teams in green and gold over the coming weeks.

Unfortunately, sports betting companies may see the Olympics as an opportunity to capitalise on this excitement by targeting audiences that are more susceptible to sports betting.

Sports betting and gambling ads are everywhere. We know they are influencing young people by normalising gambling and making it seem like a fast and easy way to make money.

Most people don't talk about gambling or sports betting – unless they are boasting about a win – so for many, gambling is hidden and may be causing them harm.

Research tells us that friends often use social media to discuss odds, share tips with each other for 'good' bets, and encourage each other to bet more generally.

Gambling harm extends beyond the gambler to family, friends, colleagues, and the wider community. An estimated one in six South Australians are experiencing gambling harm from their own or someone else's gambling – chances are, it's someone you know.

Sports betting is becoming a significant contributor to increased gambling harm and I really encourage South Australians to enjoy the Olympics for the drama of a close finish, the excitement of a highly anticipated clash, the atmosphere and the excitement!

Quotes attributable to Professor Michael Baigent, Statewide Gambling Therapy Service

Big sporting events can trigger gambling, especially in those who are at risk and those with a gambling disorder. There has been almost a 10-fold increase in sports betting over the last 20 years.

We know that any level of gambling can be harmful, but the more you do, the worse it is. The harms are in financial, family, psychological (including suicidal behaviour), occupational, legal and cultural spheres. The risk of harm from gambling skyrockets once you gamble above certain levels e.g. gambling more than 20 times per year.

We can help people with gambling problems with treatments that work.

Quotes attributable to Geoff Du Toit, Peer Worker, Statewide Gambling Therapy Service

My own experience has afforded me a great period of healing and wellness, which is now 7.5 years in recovery.

I have developed my knowledge, skills, and confidence, to self-manage my recovery, and encourage others with shared experience to use these knowledge and skills to help them cope better in these circumstances next time.

People with a gambling problem feel alone and have no mutuality, respect, support, and care in understanding their addiction, and suffer greatly.

What follows includes loss of jobs, failed relationships, severe debt, mental health, depression, and anxiety to name a few.

Gambling solves none of your problems instead it adds to other problems you may already have.

Quotes attributable to Willie Jennette, Owner, Wings Basketball Academy

I decided to join the program after seeing first-hand how gambling negatively affected those close to me.

It's important that people are aware of the serious ramifications gambling can have on lives – no one is immune, and everyone is touched in some way.

Here for the Game is an important initiative which helps create this awareness by shining a light not only on the effects gambling has on families, but its impact on the broader community.

The facts and stats behind sports betting:

- Nielson Ad Intel reports that gambling and wagering companies spent \$310 million on advertising in Australia in 2022.
- 75% of young people aged 8 to 16 can name one or more sports betting companies, with 25% able to name four or more. One quarter of bettors reported being under 18 when they first made a bet on sports.
- Men aged 18 to 34 are most likely to bet on sports online.
- Men are more likely than women to bet on sporting events – and are likely to bet more frequently and higher amounts.
- 32% of sports bettors in South Australia gamble at risky levels compared to 27% of poker machine players, and 12% of gamblers more generally.