Targeted Gambling Help Services in South Australia

Summary of reports prepared by Dr Kristine Peters for the Office for Problem Gambling, Department of Human Services

# Background

The Office for Problem Gambling (OPG) engaged Dr Kristine Peters of KPPM Strategy to identify key considerations in the design of targeted gambling help services and explore and test what targeted gambling help services might look like in the future. Dr Peters conducted a desktop review exploring emerging trends in harmful gambling and factors that affect the design and take-up of gambling help services. Dr Peters also consulted key stakeholders in the South Australian gambling landscape about the strengths, gaps and opportunities in the existing targeted gambling help service system. Dr Peters spoke to gambling help service providers and the Multicultural Communities Council of SA, members of the gambling industry, the gambling regulator, academics, and policy makers.

This work took place as part of a broader exploration of the gambling help service system in South Australia conducted by the Office for Problem Gambling. The summary of findings presented here should be understood in that context. Many of the key considerations identified by the broader exploration apply equally to targeted gambling help services and were flagged by Dr Peters’ when describing her consultation findings. The purpose of this summary is to identify those key considerations and opportunities of particular importance to the targeted gambling help service context. Dr Peters’ work offers a unique, independent perspective on service need and raises further questions to be explored in the future design of targeted gambling help services.

# Gambling help services

Mainstream gambling help services are available in every government region in South Australia. These services offer treatment (e.g., intensive therapeutic services), financial and other therapeutic support (e.g., face to face counselling), and information about gambling harm.

Targeted gambling help services respond to specific cohorts or treatment needs that are not well served by mainstream services. They do this by providing culturally sensitive practices and specific interventions that may not be available elsewhere. Targeted gambling help services in South Australia currently include the 24/7 Gambling Helpline, an intensive therapy service, services for Aboriginal and culturally and linguistically diverse communities, people involved in the criminal justice system, and people with lived experience of problem gambling.

# Key considerations for the design of a targeted gambling help service system

Dr Peters’ review identified four key considerations of particular importance in the design of a targeted gambling help service system.

**Allied help service providers play an important role in recognising gambling harm**

Research suggests that people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities are more likely to seek support from generalist services (eg general practitioners) than specialists (eg gambling help services). Where gambling harm goes unrecognised by allied service providers, clients may not be referred to specialist services equipped to facilitate support, treatment and recovery from risky gambling behaviour. Educating allied help service providers about gambling harm and the help available is essential to ensuring people experiencing gambling harm can access appropriate support.

**Effective responses to at-risk cohorts include a diverse mix of gambling help services and support**

Stakeholders identified that while people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds often seek out culturally specific services, they are also sometimes reluctant to seek support from targeted services. For example, gamblers from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds who are concerned with maintaining confidentiality may seek to access a service that is culturally sensitive but not closely associated with their community. Issues of confidentiality also apply in regional and remote communities where people may be reluctant to seek help locally because of close connections among people in the community. It is important therefore, that the gambling help service system offers a mix of targeted and mainstream services, that these services are culturally sensitive, and that services respond to the needs of people in regional locations.

**Loved ones and community play an important role in prevention, early intervention, support and recovery**

Research suggests that gamblers from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds typically first seek help from families, friends and generic agencies. Stakeholders identified key strengths of existing targeted gambling help services in South Australia to include the presence of strong, well-established relational ties between providers and the target cohorts, support is provided to all members of the community not just individual gamblers, and the presence of small providers who can respond quickly to emerging or changing needs within a target cohort.

***We work proactively with communities*** *to share information and destigmatise harmful gambling. This is an important tool in helping gamblers seek help.* (targeted gambling help service provider)

*The focus is not on the individual. “No-one wants to be the person in the naughty chair”. It’s about* ***engaging with the community*** *so that no-one is going through it alone.* (targeted gambling help service provider)

Stakeholders largely agreed that intervening early, before gamblers experienced significant financial problems, is essential. They also identified that when intervening early there are a broader range of approaches available than when the individual has reached crisis point.

**Stakeholders in the gambling landscape benefit from expert knowledge held by targeted gambling help service providers**

Gambling help services targeted towards specific cohorts within the community typically hold expert knowledge about the target group that is not shared by mainstream services, industry or allied services. As a result, targeted gambling help service providers are well placed to educate and inform key stakeholders within the gambling system regarding the harms, intervention needs, and appropriate approaches for at-risk cohorts. It is also important for cultural safety to be defined and practices co-designed with each community.

*Other providers don’t understand the complexity and sensitivities of dealing with this cohort* (people involved in the criminal justice system)*, it takes ages to bring new staff up to speed.* (targeted gambling help service provider)

*Targeted gambling help service providers are well-positioned to work directly with industry (especially the Adelaide Casino) to design and implement programs that address specific cohorts.*

# Opportunities for targeted gambling help services in South Australia

Dr Peters identified factors to be considered in the design of future targeted gambling help services that reflect the expanded scope of the Gamblers Rehabilitation Fund.

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| **Prevention** | **Public Education** | **Treatment** | **Information & Advice** | **Gambling Research** |
| Early intervention/prevention initiatives start at the community level. Funding for community programs should provide for a mix of community-led (for communities with capacity and capability) and community development initiativesDevelop partnerships with local government, non-profits and community groups to provide alternatives to gambling, particularly for people who are **socially isolated** or who use venues as a safe place to avoid **family violence**Work with clients, providers, industry and non-client gamblers to develop a common approach to early intervention and prevention messaging and programs | Expand the **Lived Experience** program to include people from CALD and regional communitiesIncrease awareness of gambling help, including education programs to inform CALD communities about the process and benefits of counselling and intensive therapy (the concept of counselling is not well understood, nor trusted)Targeted gambling help services should be supported by **coordinated messaging and education campaigns developed in collaboration** with target cohorts (i.e. CALD communities co-design, rather than simply translate generic mainstream messaging) | The gambling help service system should include both generalist and dedicated services for diverse, at-risk groups in the community. Consideration should be given to providing support for:* people from the following CALD communities (Chinese, Vietnamese, Gulf/Middle Eastern, Indian, Pakistani, Afghan, African)
* people involved in the criminal justice system

Engage families/loved ones in gambling help servicesConsider the inclusion of periodic independent case assessment to ensure clients are aware of alternative or additional interventions and are able to navigate the pathways into these programsAddress barriers to targeted gambling help service delivery and take-up in rural and regional South Australia | Build capacity of industry and help services to deliver culturally safe intervention, information and adviceReinstate regular sector meetings (Communities of Practice) to facilitate improved referral processes and service integration | Implement tracking of individual clients throughout their (long-term) journey to provide more reliable data to inform future service designExplore prevalence of gambling harm in CALD communities to address gaps in existing prevalence research |