Public Health Association of Australia:
Policy-at-a-glance – Gambling Industry Funding Policy

Key message: Public health agencies, researchers, health services and sporting organisations should not accept gambling industry funding (funding from the proceeds of gambling). Accordingly PHAA will:
1. Not accept funding from the gambling industry;
2. Strenuously advocate to ensure that public sector universities, research institutes and affiliated organisations do not accept funding support from gambling industries for research, or for any other purpose; and
3. Strenuously advocate to ensure that health services and sporting bodies in receipt of health promotion funding do not accept gambling industry money for promotions of gambling.

Summary: This policy seeks to outline a series of principles and actions to achieve the above goals.

Audience: Public health agencies, research institutions, health services and sporting organisations. Australian, State and Territory Governments, policy makers and program managers.

Responsibility: PHAA’s Primary Health Care Special Interest Group (SIG)

Date policy adopted: September 2016

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Gambling Industry Funding Policy Statement

Gambling causes harm including socio-economic harms to families and individuals, family conflict, and harm to physical and mental health. The PHAA Gambling Industry Funding Policy accompanies the PHAA Gambling and Health Policy. Each of these policies is based in evidence supporting the strong link between the limited regulations of gambling and harm. The health and wellbeing of communities, including families and individuals; is shaped and influenced by social, political and environment contexts. Funding streams can support contexts for health, or context that harm health and wellbeing. Gambling industry funding of research, and health promotion activities by sporting clubs and community organisations can function to promote gambling thereby causing harm. Accordingly, the PHAA advocates against the funding of research and health promotion by the gambling and gaming industry.

The Public Health Association of Australia notes that:

1. Gambling causes harms, including economic losses, financial difficulties, stress, family conflict, and criminal behaviour. Gambling continues to be largely understood in terms of individual pathology with limited focus on public health factors (see also PHAA Gambling and Health Policy).

2. The lack of appropriate regulation of the gambling industry has seen exponential growth in gambling losses by consumers, particularly in states and territories where electronic gaming machines are allowed in hotels and clubs.

3. The goals of a public health approach to gambling include – upstream, harm reducing interventions, particularly those focused on consumer protection; restrictions on advertising and promotion; and adoption of an independent national system of appropriate regulation and enforcement to reduce the harm-creating propensity of electronic gambling technologies such as electronic gaming machines ‘pokies’, online betting and smart phone apps.

4. Governments have committed to reducing the harm caused to people experiencing the effects of problem gambling. Yet, despite this commitment, little is being done to adopt a public health approach to manage the gambling industry’s access to and encouragement of current and potential consumers of gambling products.

5. Marketing and promotion of gambling products has increased significantly in recent years. Marketing and promotion of gambling can be subtle such as occurs in the promotion of gambling venues as ‘child-friendly’ using incentives including children’s playgrounds, children’s amusement machines emulating gambling machines, and discounted or free children’s meals.
PHAA Policy Statement on: Gambling Industry Funding Policy

6. There is an exponential increase in gambling promotion at sporting venues, through sports sponsorship and in all forms of media where sport, sport scores and sport information are available. This promotes the normalisation of gambling as part of ‘healthy’ sport activity.

7. Research activity in gambling has focussed on prevalence studies and individual pathology rather than on harm reduction, health promotion or consumer safety issues. Research activity has been substantially funded by organisations with a vested interest in research outcomes. In many such cases the research has been influenced by the funding source (including governments with vested interests in gambling taxes and the gambling industry).

The Public Health Association of Australia affirms the following principles:

8. Research and health promotion in gambling should be funded independently of the gambling and gaming industry, and of those with vested interest in gambling consumption.

9. Public health agencies, researchers, health services and sporting organisations should not accept gambling industry funding.

The Public Health Association of Australia believes that the following steps should be undertaken:

10. The PHAA will not accept funding from the gambling industry.

11. The PHAA will strenuously advocate to ensure that public sector universities, research institutes or affiliated organisations do not accept funding support from gambling industries for research, or for any other purpose; and

12. The PHAA will strenuously advocate to ensure that health services or sporting bodies do not accept gambling industry money for sport, healthy lifestyle or gambling promotion.

The Public Health Association of Australia resolves to undertake the following actions:

13. Advocate for an increase in gambling research funding with a public health focus by organisations that are independent from the gambling industry, and independent from organisations with vested interests in gambling consumption.

14. Actively seek to have universities and research institutions sign a charter of gambling research integrity.

15. Strengthen guidelines to ensure that health services organisations, sport and recreation programs and clubs are not accepting gambling industry funding for health promotion and healthy lifestyle activities.
16. Implement rigorous legislated controls to protect children and young people from exposure to the advertising and promotion of gambling including through play.

17. Ensure that public health and gambling research journals require full disclosure of all funding sources as a pre-condition of publication of articles reporting gambling or related research.

**ADOPTED 2013, REVISED AND RE-ENDORSED IN 2016**

*First adopted at the 2013 Annual General Meeting of the Public Health Association of Australia. The latest revision has been undertaken as part of the 2016 policy review process.*

**References**


