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MEDIA RELEASE

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AWARENESS WEEK HIGHLIGHTS GAMBLING IMPACT

Responsible Gambling Awareness Week, which begins today, is a timely reminder to all punters to take stock of their gambling activities and confine them to what is truly affordable, the NSW Minister for Hospitality and Racing, George Souris, said today.

“While the vast majority of Australians are able to enjoy a casual flutter without any harm, there are those who struggle to keep their gambling under control,” Mr Souris said.

“The latest research shows that 0.4 per cent of people in NSW are problem gamblers who develop serious problems including, financial distress, relationship issues and family breakdown and physical and mental health problems such as sleeplessness, anxiety and depression.

Held across Australia from 23 to 29 May 2011, the sixth annual Responsible Gambling Awareness Week aims to raise community awareness of problem gambling and highlight the free services and resources available to those who need help.

“Responsible Gambling Awareness Week aims to raise community awareness of problem gambling, highlight the resources available to help those in need and promote the importance of responsible gambling practices at a personal and community level.

“From information booths in St George and Sutherland hospitals, to a multicultural open day in Auburn, a Gambling Help barbecue in the Hunter and promotional materials in pubs and clubs in Broken Hill, a range of awareness activities will take place all around NSW.”

Mr Souris pointed out that the NSW Government provided free, confidential help to problem gamblers and their families via the Responsible Gambling Fund and its range of **Gambling Help** services.

“People in NSW can access face-to-face counselling at more than 200 locations across the State as well as phone and internet counselling 24 hours a day, seven days a week,” he said.

“If gambling is becoming a problem for you or someone you care about, please access the free information and expert advice on offer.”

For free, confidential help 24 hours a day, seven days a week phone **1800 858 858** or visit www.gamblinghelp.nsw.gov.au.

FACT SHEET

RESPONSIBLE GAMBLING AWARENESS WEEK: 23-29 MAY 2011

Signs of problem gambling

- Spends lots of time gambling and thinking about gambling
- Misses work because of time spent gambling
- Starts to place larger and more frequent bets to maintain interest and excitement produced by gambling
- Experiences mood swings and feels stressed when not gambling regularly or trying to reduce or stop gambling
- Promises to stop or reduce their gambling but has trouble following through with plan
- Lies or is secretive about gambling activities
- Missing personal belongings or cannot cover regular expenses as s/he has used these to finance gambling activities
- Borrows or takes money from family members or friends to gamble
- Keeps on gambling because they believe that s/he can win back their money and stop
- Gambles as a means of escape or to forget their problems
- Family members or friends are concerned the person's gambling will become serious.

It is important to note that an individual with gambling problems will not necessarily exhibit all these behaviours.

Problem gambling services in NSW

The Responsible Gambling Fund (RGF) provides more than \$12 million a year for problem gambling counselling, research and education and awareness including :

- the 24/7 NSW **Gambling Help** line, which in 2009/10 received 6,226 calls from problem gamblers, their families and significant others;
- 44 gambling counselling services at more than 200 locations across NSW, which in 2009/10 provided 19,966 counselling sessions to 4,495 clients;
- the national **Gambling Help Online** service; which in 2009/10 (starting 31 August 2009) attracted 12,853 visits by 9,778 visitors and provided 600 online gambling counselling sessions. Of these 600 online gambling counselling sessions, 34% were provided to people from NSW.

A **Gambling Help** survey in 2010 found that 93% of clients were better able to manage their gambling three months after receiving help.

Problem gambling research

In 2009 the NSW Population Health Survey found the State's problem gambling rate to be 0.4% of the adult population, with a further 1.2% deemed at moderate risk.

The Office of Liquor, Gaming and Racing is currently in the process of commissioning a new study into problem gambling prevalence in NSW, which will be the largest survey of its kind to date. The survey is expected to be completed by the end of the year.

2011 Awareness Week activities in NSW

SYDNEY:

- Hospitals including Sutherland, St George, Mona Vale and Liverpool are supporting the week with problem gambling displays and information booths.
- Wesley Mission in Kingswood is working with their local TAFE to feature information stands and activities.
- Hope Street Inner City Gambling Counselling at Woolloomooloo is working with Bondi pubs and clubs to set up displays and provide information.
- The Arab Council of Australia, Auburn Asian Welfare Centre, Co.As.It Italian Association of Assistance, the Greek Welfare Centre, the Vietnamese Community in Australia and Multicultural Problem Gambling Service for NSW will join together to celebrate Responsible Gambling Awareness Week with an Open Day on Wednesday 25 May, 10am - 4pm, at the Auburn Centre For Community. This event will promote free in-language counselling services.

CENTRAL COAST:

- Unifam, Wesley Wyong, and Gambling Solutions Central Coast are joining with the Division of GPs and Gosford City Council to launch a self-exclusion and referral scheme where all GPs on the Central Coast will be able to assist patients with exclusion from gaming venues. The services are also working with various clubs including the Central Coast Leagues Club and Mingara Recreational Club to hold information days and displays.

HUNTER:

- Gambling Help services are joining together to host an awareness day with a BBQ and give-aways at Bunnings Glendale.

ILLAWARRA:

- Mission Australia is focusing on young people and gambling with Youth Work students at Shellharbour TAFE hosting events on campus.

RIVERINA:

- Wagga Wagga Family Support Services is working with local pubs and clubs and has created special bar mats and promotional materials for the week.

FAR WEST:

- Lifeline Problem Gambling in Broken Hill has the support of venues throughout the area with hospitality staff wearing **Gambling Help** shirts throughout the week and promoting free problem gambling help and materials.