



Hon. George Souris M.P
Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Hospitality and Racing
Minister for the Arts

MEDIA RELEASE

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EX LEAGUE PLAYERS TO HEAD ABORIGINAL PROBLEM GAMBLING CAMPAIGN

Former Rugby League stars Ashley Gordon and Owen Craigie are staging a range of activities in Sydney as part of a state-wide campaign targeting problem gambling in Aboriginal communities.

Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Hospitality, Racing and the Arts, George Souris, said the campaign is part of the Responsible Gambling Fund's \$2.4 million three-year *Early Intervention, Prevention and Community Engagement Strategy* to reach out to those most at risk of developing a gambling problem.

"The NSW Population Health Survey found that four per cent of Aboriginal people felt they had a gambling problem and 10 per cent knew someone with a gambling problem," Mr Souris said.

"This campaign directly engages community members such as Aboriginal elders, local professionals and school students to educate them about the potential impacts of gambling and encourage those with a gambling problem to seek help.

"Under the program Ashley Gordon – an experienced problem gambling counsellor – will run the *NSW Aboriginal Safe Gambling* program and meet with service providers supporting Aboriginal people in health, education, employment and housing to discuss problem gambling.

"Government and non-government agencies and interested community members will also take part through a community workshop.

"Reformed problem gambler Owen Craigie will facilitate Mission Australia's *Gambling Smart Training Program*, an intensive two-day training workshop on gambling specifically for health workers servicing Aboriginal communities."

The *NSW Aboriginal Safe Gambling* program will be held at:

- **Redfern (July 21)** at the Redfern Community Centre between 10am and 2pm; and
- **Mount Druitt (July 28)** at Aboriginal Medical Services Western Sydney between 10am and 2:30pm.

The *Gambling Smart Training Program* will be held at:

- **Redfern (July 27 - 28)** at Redfern Aboriginal Corporation between 10am and 4pm; and
- **Emerton (October 11 - 12)** at Marrin Weejali Aboriginal Corporation between 10am and 4pm.

Mr Souris said the State-wide Aboriginal problem gambling awareness campaign has been a big success in regional NSW.

“Since its launch in February this year, more than 7,000 people have taken part in 18 problem gambling workshops and community events rolled out across NSW as part of the campaign,” Mr Souris said.

“Community events, workshops and training programs promoting the responsible gambling message have taken place in the State’s North West, Central West and North Coast.

“The program will target destinations in Southern and Western NSW later this year.”

After a successful career in rugby league, Mr Gordon is now an Aboriginal gambling consultant and works as a researcher with the Centre for Gambling Education and Research at Southern Cross University at Lismore.

“In Indigenous communities gambling can be linked to alcohol and drug abuse, domestic violence, financial hardship, crime and mental health issues,” Mr Gordon said.

“I’ve seen these problems first hand during visits to more than 100 Aboriginal communities throughout Australia.”

Ashley Gordon played at fullback and wing for the Newcastle Knights and the Penrith Panthers and was named Dally M Winger of the Year in 1990.

Owen Craigie played five-eighth for the Newcastle Knights, Wests Tigers and South Sydney and also represented Australia.

The Responsible Gambling Fund provides more than \$12 million a year for problem gambling counselling, research, education and awareness.

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