



George Souris MP
Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Hospitality and Racing
Minister for the Arts

Victor Dominello MP
Minister for Citizenship and Communities Minister for Aboriginal Affairs

MEDIA RELEASE

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ABORIGINAL PROBLEM GAMBLING TARGETED

Minister for Hospitality and Racing, George Souris, today announced a multi-million dollar, three-year strategy to target problem gambling in NSW Aboriginal communities.

Mr Souris said the comprehensive; \$4.05 million *Gambling and Aboriginal People Strategy* will include community engagement, education and awareness, problem gambling screening, counselling and support services, training, and a cadetship programme for Aboriginal problem gambling workers.

He also announced a further \$192,940 for a six-month extension to the NSW Aboriginal Safe Gambling Service program run by former Newcastle Knights footballer and problem gambling counsellor Ashley Gordon and currently being provided to more than 30 communities.

Mr Souris also announced an additional \$50,000 to develop and promote problem gambling resources and marketing communications for Aboriginal communities.

“This \$4.29 million allocation by the NSW Government through its Responsible Gambling Fund will focus on supporting aspects of programs which have been proven to deliver achievements and outcomes for Aboriginal people experiencing gambling problems,” Mr Souris said.

“The *Gambling and Aboriginal People Strategy* will adopt lessons from previous successful programs to build on knowledge, experience, community support and trust which has been built up to date.

“In doing so, it will seek to provide visible, culturally-appropriate and effective education, prevention, early-intervention and treatment of problem gambling and associated issues within NSW Aboriginal communities.”

Mr Souris said key elements of the *Gambling and Aboriginal People Strategy* will include:

- Community engagement to raise awareness of problem gambling as a complex health and cultural issue for Aboriginal people;
- Education programs including strategies for prevention and early intervention and the promotion of help-seeking and assistance;
- Screening for problem gambling including information on problem gambling, the development of specialist treatment of problem gambling within Aboriginal communities, and improved protocols for mainstream Gambling Help services interacting with Aboriginal people;

- Cultural awareness training to support successful interactions with Aboriginal communities on problem gambling and with Aboriginal clients to control gambling and achieve harm minimisation;
- Distribution of Aboriginal-specific information and materials on problem gambling to Aboriginal organisations and mainstream services that work with Aboriginal communities;
- \$1.5 million over three years to establish an Aboriginal Problem Gambling Counsellor Cadetship Program. Initially announced in the May Budget, this program will allocate \$500,000 a year for training, mentoring and placement of Aboriginal workers within Gambling Help counselling services to deliver community education and support in Aboriginal communities.

Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Minister for Citizenship and Communities, Victor Dominello, welcomed the strategy.

Mr Dominello said gambling is a source of significant problems for both individuals and families in Aboriginal communities resulting in financial hardship, family discord and contact with the criminal justice system.

“According to the Centre for Gambling Education and Research, problem gambling is prevalent in about two per cent of the mainstream population but in Aboriginal communities that figure is about 15 per cent with some communities experiencing over 30 per cent prevalence,” Mr Dominello said.

“The harm associated with gambling is linked to the abuse of alcohol and other drugs, financial distress, domestic violence, neglect of children, eviction and a myriad of other health and welfare issues.

“The NSW Government is committed to helping address this important social issue through programs that effectively meet the specific needs of Aboriginal communities.”

**Media contact: Norm Lipson (Minister Souris) 0467 734 679
Laura Hofman (Minister Dominello) 0411 261 837**