



MEDIA RELEASE

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\$48 MILLION FOR NSW GAMBLING COUNSELLING SERVICES

The NSW Government has called tenders valued at more than \$48 million for high quality counselling and support services for problem gamblers and their families across the State, Minister for Hospitality and Racing, George Souris, said.

Mr Souris called for expressions of interest from suitably qualified counselling providers while releasing a new report, *Prevalence of Gambling and Problem Gambling in New South Wales*, which identified a problem gambling rate of 0.8 per cent of the NSW adult population.

“While this report shows only a small proportion of NSW residents are problem gamblers, the Government is committed to improving efforts to address what is an important social issue,” Mr Souris said.

“The Liberals and nationals Government is calling for tenders valued at over \$48 million for organisations to provide high quality and free counselling and support services for NSW problem gamblers over the next four years.

“We want to support best practice services and programs with proven ability to operate efficiently and effectively at the frontline of our communities.

“The Government will be ensuring that the needs of people in all areas in NSW can be met – from metropolitan areas to regional and remote communities.

“Evaluating service delivery and ensuring that problem gambling services are accessible and relevant is vital to the NSW Government’s commitment to ensuring high standards.

“We also recognise that problem gambling service delivery should be informed by the latest available research, with the Responsible Gambling Fund Trustees overseeing a high quality research agenda.”

Mr Souris said NSW currently has 46 problem gambling counselling and support services operating at more than 200 locations across the State which are funded through the Responsible Gambling Fund, with funding agreements due to expire on 30 June 2013.

“A total of \$48.112 million will now be allocated across the State from the NSW Responsible Gambling Fund to support new contracts for problem gambling counselling and support services from July 2013 through to 30 June 2017,” Mr Souris said.

“Services being funded include mainstream problem gambling counselling services, multicultural counselling services, problem gambling legal services and training services for problem gambling counsellors.

“This will be an opportunity for NSW to strengthen its efforts to address problem gambling through improved service delivery following a needs analysis of the sector.

“The Government has consulted widely with the counselling services sector, examined data about gambling prevalence and access to counselling across the State, and will be providing services based on sound evidence that can help turn around the lives of problem gamblers and their families.

“Identified areas for improvement include the need for more after hours counselling support, the need for financial counselling alongside therapeutic counselling, ensuring clients with complex mental health issues are referred to appropriately skilled clinicians, more community education and service promotion and the need for better targeted key performance indicators.”

Mr Souris said some of the key findings from the *Prevalence of Gambling and Problem Gambling in New South Wales* report, which surveyed 10,000 NSW residents from September to November 2011, included:

- 65 per cent of the NSW population had participated in at least one gambling activity in the previous 12 months – down from 69 per cent in 2006.
- The most popular gambling activity was lotteries (41 per cent) followed by instant scratch tickets (28 per cent), gaming machines (27 per cent), horse-greyhound races (24 per cent), Keno (14 per cent), sports betting (8 per cent), table games in a casino (7 per cent) and casino or pokies-style games on the Internet (2 per cent).
- In NSW, problem gamblers are significantly more likely to be male, younger (18-24 years and 35-54 years), be single, be divorced/separated/widowed, unemployed, have low educational attainment and be a regular gambler on gaming machines, on horse or greyhound races and on sports or non-sports events.
- The survey classified 0.8 per cent of adults as problem gamblers, 2.9 per cent as moderate risk gamblers and 8.4 per cent as low risk gamblers. Using a similar methodology to the previous 2006 survey, the 2011 problem gambling prevalence rate would be 0.4 per cent, moderate risk gambling would be 1.5 per cent and low risk gambling would be 2.5 per cent.

The *Prevalence of Gambling and Problem Gambling in New South Wales* report is available at www.olgr.nsw.gov.au/gaming_research_year.asp