

# Ministers Meeting on Illegal Offshore Wagering Reform

25 November 2016

## Communiqué

### Melbourne

Commonwealth and state and territory ministers met for the first time in Melbourne today to discuss the Australian Government's Response to the *Review of Illegal Offshore Wagering*. The meeting was chaired by the Hon Alan Tudge MP, the Commonwealth Minister for Human Services, with responsibility for illegal offshore wagering.

Ministers noted that the Review found that online wagering, growing at 15 per cent per annum, is the fastest growing gambling segment in Australia. Over \$1.4 billion is wagered online each year.

It was also noted that while there is no authoritative figure, it is estimated that between five per cent and 26 per cent of all gambling expenditure occurs via illegal offshore gambling sites. These illegal sites present several problems including greater risk to consumers, sports integrity issues, and loss of jobs and revenue in Australia.

Ministers acknowledged that gambling is a legitimate industry, and that many Australians enjoy recreational online wagering. Recognising this, governments want to ensure that nationally consistent consumer protections are in place to better protect Australian consumers.

#### ***Establishment of a strong National Consumer Protection Framework***

Ministers noted the *Review of Illegal Offshore Wagering* identified that the consumer protection regime for online wagering is inconsistent across Australia.

Ministers agreed that more can be done to limit the harm caused by online wagering for Australians and agreed to continue working together towards the development of a National Consumer Protection Framework. In-principle agreement was provided for the following elements to be included in this framework;

- a national self-exclusion register for online wagering;
- a voluntary, opt-out pre-commitment scheme for online wagering;
- prohibition of lines of credit being offered by online wagering providers;
- a harmonised regulatory regime to ensure the offering of inducements are consistent with responsible gambling;
- the provision of operators to provide activity statements for online wagering on demand and on a regular basis;
- more consistent responsible gambling messaging and gambling counselling advice across the nation;
- staff training in the responsible conduct of gambling through a government approved provider;
- reducing the current 90 day verification period for customer verification to open a wagering account;
- discouraging links between online wagering operators and pay day lenders; and
- greater national consistency in advertising of online wagering services.

This Framework will put in place a higher level of national consumer protections than is currently in place in Australia to improve harm minimisation outcomes for Australian consumers.

A working group has been established and will continue developing the National Consumer Protection Framework. Details will be provided for the next meeting of Ministers in early 2017 with a public consultation process to follow.

### ***Changes to the Interactive Gambling Act 2001***

Ministers acknowledged the need to crack down on illegal offshore gambling providers and noted that amendments to the *Interactive Gambling Act 2001* were introduced into the Commonwealth Parliament on 10 November 2016.

These amendments:

- clearly state that it is illegal for overseas gambling companies to offer interactive gambling products to Australians without a state or territory licence;
- empower the Australian Communications and Media Authority with new civil penalties;
- introduce other disruption measures to curb illegal offshore gambling activity, such as placing company directors of illegal offshore companies on the Movement Alert List; and
- clarify the law by prohibiting 'click-to-call' in-play wagering services to respect the original intent of the Interactive Gambling Act.

Minister's also acknowledged that the Australian Government is making progress on assessing the feasibility of Internet Service Provider and Financial Payment Blocking.

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