

Victorian Government response to the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee Inquiry into *Gambling and liquor regulation in Victoria: a follow up of three Auditor-General reports*

Pursuant to Section 36 of the *Parliamentary Committees Act 2003*, this paper provides a response to the recommendations in the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee's (PAEC) report for the Inquiry into Gambling and liquor regulation in Victoria: a follow up of three Auditor-General reports.

This response has been prepared in accordance with the Guidelines for Victorian Government Submissions and Responses to Inquiries. The following key sets out the four categories of response, which are consistent with the Guidelines.

Column 1: Contains PAEC's recommendations, as published in its report.

Column 2: Indicates the Government's response to each recommendation and provides an explanation of the Government's position on the recommendation:

Guide to responses	
Support in full	All elements of the recommendation are supported.
Support in principle	The Victorian Government generally supports the intent or merit of the policy underlining the recommendation.
Under review	Further analysis is required for the Victorian Government to determine its position.
Not support	The Victorian Government does not support the recommendation.

PAEC RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSE
<p>1. The Victorian Government consider extending its support for the Libraries After Dark program, or similar programs. In addition, the Victorian Government undertake work to understand:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • what additional safe places of recreation may be needed by communities after hours as alternatives to gaming venues • which geographic areas would benefit most from these programs • the need and demand in the community for such programs • whether the Libraries After Dark model can be expanded to benefit at-risk groups in the community. 	<p>Support in full</p> <p>The Victorian Government supports this recommendation and will work with local governments to facilitate the continued operation of the Libraries After Dark program. The stewardship of this program will transfer to the Department of Health (DH) from 1 July 2024. DH will continue to review opportunities to support people to access safe places in community settings. Importantly, welcoming and accessible spaces (that are open after-hours) are needed to enable peer support, therapeutic activities and brief interventions for people experiencing distress, but not requiring urgent or crisis support.</p>
<p>2. The Victorian Government work with the Coroners Court of Victoria to expand its analysis of data from 2017 onwards to develop a complete and up to date dataset of gambling-related suicides in Victoria.</p>	<p>Support in principle</p> <p>The Victorian Government supports the expansion of data analysis and will consider this recommendation as part of a new whole of government, community-wide Victorian suicide prevention and response strategy, under development. This strategy is being led by DH and will be accompanied by rolling implementation plans and an accountability framework. Expansion of data analysis will be subject to future government resourcing.</p>

PAEC RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSE
<p>3. The Victorian Government explore whether the Community Support Fund can provide greater support for programs, services and initiatives to prevent and reduce gambling harm in the Victorian community</p>	<p>Support in principle</p> <p>The Victorian Government supports this recommendation in principle, noting the <i>Gambling Regulation Act 2003</i> governs Community Support Fund allocations and programs that address problem gambling have first call on the fund. The Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation’s (VRGF’s) activities and programs are funded by the Community Support Fund. Noting all VRGF functions will be distributed across other government departments and agencies, these activities and programs aim to prevent and reduce gambling harm and have included various awareness campaigns, the Love the Game Sporting Club Program, Be Ahead of the Game Program and Gambler’s Help services.</p>
<p>4. The Victorian Government review the purpose of the community benefits arrangements and what percentage of gaming revenue is being redirected into the community, as opposed to being spent on operational expenses and expenditure aimed at increasing clientele.</p>	<p>Support in full</p> <p>The Government supports reviewing programs to ensure they are appropriately designed and maximise benefit to the community. It is important that clubs invest back into the communities, ensuring more people can benefit from the revenue that is derived from gaming machines.</p>
<p>5. As part of this review, the Victorian Government consider if there is a public benefit in replacing the existing community benefits arrangements and redirect the 8.33% of gaming revenue of clubs with electronic gaming machine licences to a publicly-managed fund targeted towards reducing and preventing gambling harm.</p>	<p>Support in principle</p> <p>The Victorian Government supports regularly reviewing tax settings and arrangements to ensure the system operates as intended and balances the need to raise revenue against the risks associated with gambling harm.</p>

PAEC RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSE
<p>6. The Victorian Gambling and Casino Control Commission continue to report to the Victorian Auditor General’s Office on the implementation of Recommendation 8 of the 2017 Regulating Gambling and Liquor audit.</p>	<p>Support in full</p> <p>The Victorian Government, Victoria Police and the Victorian Gambling and Casino Control Commission (VGCCC) support this recommendation.</p> <p>Recommendation 8 of the 2017 Regulating Gambling and Liquor audit refers to revising the risk-based approach to compliance to ensure better targeting of compliance activities, as it relates to compliance at licensed premises.</p> <p>Government supports a risk-based gambling licence compliance process as a more effective way to manage the potential harms associated with alcohol use and abuse. Ongoing collaboration and sharing of information between the VGCCC and Victoria Police are essential in identifying licensed premises that contribute to alcohol related harm.</p> <p>Implementation of this recommendation will occur as part of Phase 3 of the VGCCC Regulatory Approach development.¹ Phase 3 comprises a complete redesign of this approach and associated capability uplift leading to risk-based, and intelligence-led regulatory practice. Phase 3 design work is expected to be completed no later than early 2024, with staged implementation over the following 12 months.</p>

¹ Victorian Gambling and Casino Control Commission (2022) *Our Strategy*, Victorian Gambling and Casino Control Commission, Available at: https://www.vgccc.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/our_strategy_0.pdf.

PAEC RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSE
<p>7. Twelve months after the commencement of the new closure time (4.00am to 10.00am) for electronic gaming machine rooms operating in Victorian venues, the Government review:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) the level of harm minimisation arising from the new operating hours b) the benefits of expanded closure hours. 	<p>Support in principle</p> <p>The Victorian Government supports this recommendation in principle and will monitor and review the implementation of all reforms announced on 16 July 2023 as a matter of course.</p>
<p>8. The Victorian Government examine daily, weekly and annual gambling loss limits including lessons from regulatory frameworks in Norway, Sweden and Finland and loss limits to be implemented in Tasmania next year e.g. \$100 per day, \$500 per month and \$5,000 per year.</p>	<p>Not support</p> <p>The Victorian Government regularly engages with interstate and international colleagues regarding gambling regulatory frameworks, to ensure Victoria has the strongest gambling harm protections in place. On 16 July 2023, the Victorian Government announced that all gaming venues in Victoria will require mandatory carded play with pre-commitment limits. The Victorian Government will ensure this reform is successfully implemented and its effectiveness is evaluated appropriately.</p>
<p>9. The Victorian Government consider the impact of reducing the total number of electronic gaming machines.</p>	<p>Support in principle</p> <p>The Victorian Government regularly reviews the number and location of electronic gaming machines as a matter of course.</p>
<p>10. The Victorian Government urge the Commonwealth Government to implement advertising bans in relation to gambling activities in line with international best practice.</p>	<p>Support in full</p> <p>The Victorian Government will continue to advocate for tougher gambling advertising restrictions.</p>

PAEC RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSE
<p>11. The Victorian Government consider banning gambling advertising in areas that come under state jurisdiction, such as public places. The Victorian Government also consider introducing stricter rules on primetime gambling advertising similar to the rules recently adopted in the South Australian Government’s gambling advertising Codes of Practice.</p>	<p>Support in principle</p> <p>The Victorian Government recognises that gambling advertising is an area that is predominantly overseen by the Commonwealth Government.</p> <p>Noting the South Australian Commissioner’s statement to the Federal Inquiry that indicated that Commonwealth action would be more effective, a national approach is desirable as there are limitations to the state’s powers regarding advertising.</p> <p>The Victorian Government will consider any proposal by the Commonwealth to restrict advertising and reserves its right to implement state led mechanisms to reduce gambling advertising in Victoria.</p>
<p>12. Gambling venue licence applicants that wish to introduce or increase the number of electronic gaming machines, and/or gaming venues in a location must prove to the Victorian Gambling and Casino Control Commission that this will provide a ‘net economic and social benefit’ to the surrounding community.</p>	<p>Support in principle</p> <p>The Victorian Government supports this recommendation in principle, noting sections 3.3.7 and 3.3.17 of the <i>Gambling Regulation Act 2003</i> prevent the VGCCC from granting an electronic gaming application unless satisfied the net economic and social impact of the approval will not be detrimental to the wellbeing of the relevant community (no-net detriment test).</p>
<p>13. The Victorian Government explore the guidance on precinct structure plans in the existing planning laws to consider whether gaming venues should continue to be classified as recreational and/or entertainment facilities in newly established greenfield estates.</p>	<p>Support in principle</p> <p>The Victorian Government supports the principle behind this recommendation, noting the classification of gaming venues as recreational and/or entertainment facilities in newly established greenfield estates can be addressed using alternative measures, rather than changes to the existing planning laws.</p> <p>The <i>Precinct Structure Planning Guidelines: New Communities in Victoria</i> (VPA, October 2021) (the Guidelines) provide best practice planning guidance for liveable new communities in Victoria.</p>

PAEC RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSE
<p>14. The Victorian Gambling and Casino Control Commission (VGCCC) establish a regular program of consultation with local government to inform and advise of current gambling regulation licensing, information and compliance shortfalls, and of any risk-based regulatory measures that the VGCCC could readily incorporate to reduce gambling harm in the community.</p>	<p>Support in principle The Victorian Government supports the intent of this recommendation, noting engagement with local councils and the broader community is underway.</p>
<p>15. The Victorian Liquor Commission publicly release data it captures over the next two years relating to liquor licence breaches in the municipalities of Melbourne, Port Phillip, Yarra and Stonnington. This information should inform the Government’s reviews of the new inner city liquor licensing arrangements that are planned to take place in 2024 and 2025.</p>	<p>Support in principle The Victorian Government agrees with this recommendation and has committed to review the operation of the lifting of the freeze on late-night liquor licences.</p>

PAEC RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSE
<p>16. The Victorian Government outline its plan for further community consultation about the lifting of the late night liquor licence ban. The Government’s review determine whether there are any changes to harms from alcohol associated with the lifting of the ban.</p>	<p>Support in full</p> <p>The Victorian Government supports this recommendation. In early 2024, the Department of Justice and Community Safety (DJCS) undertook an initial review of the operations of the new Ministerial guidelines for late-night liquor licences in inner Melbourne. Victoria Police, the Victorian Liquor Commission (VLC), and the cities of Melbourne, Port Phillip, Stonnington and Yarra were engaged. A summary of this review will be published in late 2024. A more comprehensive review will be undertaken in 2025. This will include broader engagement, including with law enforcement, local government, industry, and alcohol harm reduction stakeholders.</p>
<p>17. The Victorian Government review the resources available to the Victorian Liquor Commission, to ensure that it can fully meet its regulatory obligations in liquor licencing, compliance and enforcement in a timely and effective manner.</p>	<p>Support in principle</p> <p>The Victorian Government supports this recommendation in principle, noting a review of key functions across VLC resources is underway.</p>

PAEC RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSE
<p>18. The Victorian Gambling and Casino Control Commission continue to report to the Victorian Auditor General’s Office on the implementation of Recommendation 9 of the 2017 Regulating Gambling and Liquor audit.</p>	<p>Support in full</p> <p>The Victorian Government supports this recommendation, and notes implementation will occur as part of Phase 3 of the VGCCC Regulatory Approach development.² Phase 3 comprises a complete redesign of this approach and associated capability uplift leading to risk-based, and intelligence-led regulatory practice. This work covers all frameworks, methodologies, processes, and practices across all dimensions of VGCCC regulatory activities and for each segment of the gambling industry over which the VGCCC has regulatory responsibility.</p> <p>Phase 3 design work is expected to be completed no later than early 2024, with staged implementation over the following 12 months.</p>
<p>19. The Victorian Gambling and Casino Control Commission further develop its compliance and enforcement strategy to ensure balanced coverage of inspections across metropolitan Melbourne and regional Victoria.</p>	<p>Support in principle</p> <p>The Victorian Government supports this recommendation in principle. Inspections should be conducted on an intelligence-led, rather than solely venue location, basis. In 2023, the VGCCC enhanced its intelligence and data holdings for venues across regional Victoria. The VGCCC increased targeted compliance activities on venues across regional local government areas where gambling spend has increased significantly, and/or there is a history of non-compliance or high concentration of poker machines.</p>

² Victorian Gambling and Casino Control Commission (2022) *Our Strategy*, Victorian Gambling and Casino Control Commission, Available at: https://www.vgccc.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/our_strategy_0.pdf.

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<p>20. The Victorian Gambling and Casino Control Commission and the Victorian Liquor Commission consider increasing 'mystery-shopper' style compliance exercises to assist with licensee enforcement.</p>	<p>Support in principle</p> <p>The Victorian Government supports this recommendation in principle and recognises the value in having robust compliance mechanisms and exercises in place to assist with licensee enforcement.</p> <p>The Victorian Government will consider options to incorporate controlled operations (such as 'mystery shopper' compliance exercises) into risk-based liquor inspection and enforcement plans.</p>
<p>21. The Victorian Liquor Commission develop an appropriate training module for the responsible service of alcohol for delivery drivers.</p>	<p>Support in principle</p> <p>The Victorian Government supports the introduction of training for delivery drivers on the responsible service of alcohol, subject to further consultation.</p>
<p>22. The Victorian Liquor Commission, in conjunction with the Department of Education, Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority and the Office for Youth, review and update where necessary education programs and resources for school students about alcohol harm.</p>	<p>Support in principle</p> <p>The Victorian Government supports the intent of this recommendation and will consider the appropriateness of education programs and resources for school students about alcohol harm.</p>

PAEC RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSE
<p>23. The Victorian Gambling and Casino Control Commission review its Budget Paper no. 3 performance measures with a view to developing performance measures that demonstrate the impact of its harm minimisation legislative responsibilities. The new measures should be informed by the objectives and indicators in the upcoming Strategic Plan and outcomes framework that is in development.</p>	<p>Support in full</p> <p>The Victorian Government regularly reviews the appropriateness of Budget Paper No. 3 (BP3) performance measures.</p> <p>The VGCCC is developing an outcomes framework that is reflective of the VGCCC’s purpose, including work undertaken to realise a ‘balanced scorecard’ for measuring the effectiveness of its performance.</p>
<p>24. The Victoria Liquor Commission publish information that demonstrates how harm minimisation is being incorporated into its regulatory framework, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing performance measures for inclusion in the Budget Papers and its Annual Report • Posting timely information including Commission tribunal hearing decisions, the compliance record of licence holders and licence applicant history on its website. 	<p>Support in principle</p> <p>The Victorian Government regularly reviews the appropriateness of BP3 performance measures.</p> <p>The VLC publishes its tribunal hearing decisions on its website and will also publish these decisions on the Australasian Legal Information Institute (AUSTLII) database. Additionally, the VLC will consider options for publishing additional licensing and enforcement data online.</p>

PAEC RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSE
<p>25. In light of the potential for harm caused by products promoted by the gambling and alcohol industry, the government consider reforming donations from the gambling and alcohol industry and associated entities to state political parties.</p>	<p>Under review</p> <p>The Victorian Government will consider industry-specific donation bans as part of its response to the Electoral Review Expert Panel (Expert Panel) report tabled in Parliament on 5 March 2024. The Victorian Government previously wrote to the Expert Panel requesting it consider whether the regulatory regime governing donations in Victoria could be strengthened by identifying and prohibiting particular industries from making political donations as part of its review of the government’s 2018 reforms to the <i>Electoral Act 2002</i>. This was in response to Recommendation 13 of the Independent Broad-based Anticorruption Commission’s Operation Sandon. The Expert Panel noted that Victoria’s disclosure requirements and low general cap on political donations make it unnecessary to introduce bans on donations from particular industries.</p>
<p>26. Gambling prevention and treatment programs be delivered by a health-rather than justice-based agency to embed the public health approach to gambling.</p>	<p>Support in full</p> <p>The Victorian Government is committed to maintaining a public health approach to preventing and addressing gambling harm. On 1 July 2024, gambling prevention and treatment services will be transferred to DH.</p> <p>This transfer will enable gambling to be considered in a more holistic and integrated way in the planning, delivery and evaluation of mental health and wellbeing, and alcohol and other drug, programs and services. DJCS and the VGCCC will develop and share knowledge that informs their regulatory functions to maintain their commitment to gambling prevention and harm minimisation.</p>

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<p>27. The Victorian Government ensure an updated Victorian population gambling and health study is published based on surveys conducted in 2022–2023 and continues to be published in future years.</p>	<p>Support in full</p> <p>The Victorian Government supports the need for ongoing population level gambling and health studies as a critical element of understanding the cohorts most at risk of gambling harm, and the harm associated with specific gambling products and environments.</p> <p>Work is underway on the next Victorian Population Gambling and Health Study to ensure a report based on the 2023-24 survey will be available for publication in 2024.</p>
<p>28. The Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation or its successor publicly report on actions recommended by funded research that have been integrated into the design of its prevention programs and treatment services design.</p>	<p>Support in principle</p> <p>Victorian Government supports this recommendation in principle, and notes that most VRGF funded research details key findings, but not direct recommendations. Additionally, not all research is relevant to prevention program or treatment service design. Once the transfer of VRGF's functions is finalised, the successor agencies will consider how research findings can be best shared across the service system.</p>
<p>29. A gambling research plan be developed to guide future publicly funded research investment and address evidence gaps.</p>	<p>Support in full</p> <p>The DJCS (where the VRGF's research functions will be transferred from 1 July 2024) will work with academics, public sector agencies and gambling harm prevention advocates to develop a revised gambling research agenda, to guide future publicly funded research investment.</p>

PAEC RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSE
<p>30. The Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation or its successor publish the service system review on its website.</p>	<p>Support in full</p> <p>The Victorian Government supports this recommendation.</p> <p>Once the VRGF prevention and program functions (including client facing services) are transferred to DH, a review (the DH review) of the gambling prevention and treatment system will be undertaken over the 2024-25 and 2025-26 financial years, to embed a new operating model.</p> <p>While DH review will build on the findings of VRGF’s review, its expanded scope will reflect a wider operating context of the mental health and wellbeing and alcohol and other drug service systems, including reforms recommended by the 2021 Royal Commission into Victoria’s Mental Health System.</p> <p>The DH review will also be considered in the context of findings from VAGO’s 2021 report on <i>Reducing the Harm Caused by Gambling</i>, and submissions to this PAEC Inquiry. Findings from the DH review will be published on the DH website.</p>
<p>31. Publicly funded gambling research adopts a public health approach, improves understanding of gambling harm, directly informs prevention and treatment services, is outcomes focussed and readily accessible.</p>	<p>Support in full</p> <p>Gambling research undertaken and funded by the Victorian Government through the VRGF has consistently adopted a public health approach to gambling harm prevention and minimisation. The Victorian Government supports this recommendation and will ensure the public health approach is maintained, once the VRGF functions are transferred to DJCS from 1 July 2024.</p>

PAEC RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSE
<p>32. The Victorian Government support further research into gambling harm, specifically into the impacts of co-occurring conditions, gambling amongst culturally and linguistically diverse communities and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and the relationship between family violence and gambling. Such research inform programs aimed at preventing gambling harm in these communities.</p>	<p>Support in full</p> <p>Noting the response to Recommendation 29, the Victorian Government supports further research into gambling harm, including co-occurring conditions and the impact on diverse communities in the state.</p> <p>The Victorian Government notes the findings of previously conducted studies in this space funded by the VRGF, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • intimate partner violence and clients accessing gambling help services are intricately intertwined with factors surrounding stigma, shame and secrecy attached to both³ • children who grew up with parental gambling were found to have experienced higher incidents of harm, notably negative psychosocial impacts, whilst parents reported lower incidents of harm, mostly focused on financial impacts⁴ • affected others (that is, family members, partners, friends and colleagues of individuals who experience gambling harm) are estimated to comprise between 2-19 per cent of the general adult population depending on the definition and measurements used and higher-risk gamblers are more likely to have a greater number of affected others than low-risk gamblers. An association has been found between affected others, living in a city, being a male immigrant, and living on social welfare⁵ • an evaluation of Chinese and Tamil communities' experiences with gambling found these migrant communities experienced a number of vulnerabilities, such as lack of support, anxiety and stress associated with migration. Stigma, shame, and lack of awareness and understanding of western concepts of counselling were also a barrier to help-seeking.⁶ <p>It is essential successor agencies consider the pre-existing evidence and ensure future research is based on a gap/needs analysis.</p>

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PAEC RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSE
<p>33. Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation data and research be interrogated to extract findings to improve gambling treatment client retention. These findings be shared widely with prevention and treatment services and other health practitioners.</p>	<p>Support in full</p> <p>The Victorian Government supports this recommendation and notes the relevant elements have been implemented as part of the VRGF Sector Development Strategy and other existing knowledge mobilisation efforts.</p> <p>Implementation of specific recommendations will be jointly considered by DJCS and DH. Decisions regarding the Gambler’s Help Service System Review and the future design of gambling harm prevention and treatment services will inform the consideration.</p>

³ Dr Cowlshaw, S et al (2021) *Recognition and responses to Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) in Gambler’s Help services: A qualitative study*, Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation. Available at: https://responsiblegambling.vic.gov.au/documents/1113/VRGF_RR_SEPT2021_Recognition_and_responses_to_IPV_in_gamblers_help_services.pdf

⁴ Suomi, A et al (2022) *Gambling harm experienced by children of parents who gamble*, Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation, Available at: <https://responsiblegambling.vic.gov.au/resources/publications/gambling-harm-experienced-by-children-of-parents-who-gamble-1112/>.

⁵ Dowling, N. A. et al (2022) *Addressing gambling harm to affected others: a scoping review*, Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation. Available at: <https://responsiblegambling.vic.gov.au/resources/publications/addressing-gambling-harm-to-affected-others-a-scoping-review-1044/>

⁶ Feldman, S. et al (2014) *A qualitative investigation of the experiences, attitudes and beliefs about gambling in the Chinese and Tamil communities in Victoria*, Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation. Available at: <https://responsiblegambling.vic.gov.au/documents/78/Research-report-chinese-and-tamil-communities.pdf>

PAEC RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSE
<p>34. The Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation’s reducing gambling harm outcomes framework be amended to address and monitor:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the relationship between gambling and coercive control • how contextual gambling factors impact the nature and extent of family violence • how economic abuse is linked to gambling • the relationship between online gambling and family violence. 	<p>Support in principle</p> <p>The Victorian Government recognises the importance of addressing and monitoring the relationship between family violence and its associated behaviours, and gambling-related harm.</p> <p>The VRGF’s reducing gambling harm outcomes framework is designed to provide insight into the factors that influence gambling harm, and measurement of outcomes against these factors. The elements identified within the recommendation are not of this nature and should be considered through research and evaluation, including in the design of prevention and treatment programs and gambling regulation, rather than the existing outcomes framework.</p>
<p>35. The Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation’s reducing gambling harm outcomes framework be amended to capture:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • client confidence or sustained changes in behaviour • long-term measurements of client progress • the financial wellness of clients. 	<p>Support in principle</p> <p>The Victorian Government acknowledges the importance of capturing accurate reporting data on Gambler’s Help client treatment outcomes and supports an increase in reporting and monitoring within the revised Gambler’s Help service system.</p> <p>The VRGF’s reducing gambling harm outcomes framework is not the appropriate mechanism to report on and capture tracking of individual client level behaviour, change and harm reduction. This information would be more effectively considered through research and evaluation, rather than outcomes measurements.</p>

PAEC RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSE
<p>36. The client information sharing and referral protocols recommended by the Victorian Auditor-General’s Office in the 2021 Reducing the Harm Caused by Gambling audit be finalised as a matter or priority, with a high level agreement signed off between the relevant departments.</p>	<p>Support in principle</p> <p>The Victorian Government notes the importance of information sharing and referral protocols across the service system. DH will consider the full implementation of the protocols recommended by VAGO after the transition of current Gambler’s Help functions from the VRGF to DH.</p>
<p>37. The Victorian Government consider analysing its current gambling treatment services to consider whether they meet best practice, evidence-based models of care, quality standards, clear outcome frameworks and system intelligence, as is the case in the healthcare system.</p>	<p>Support in full</p> <p>The Victorian Government supports this recommendation, noting the VRGF undertook a review of the Gambler’s Help Service System in 2023, and considered whether the system aligns with best practice, evidence-based models of care, quality standards, clear outcome frameworks and system intelligence.</p> <p>The DH review will evaluate the gambling prevention and treatment system over the 2024-25 and 2025-26 financial years, to embed a new operating model. The DH review will build on the findings of VRGF’s review. However, the review’s expanded scope will reflect a wider operating context of the mental health and wellbeing, and alcohol and other drugs service systems, including reforms recommended by the 2021 Royal Commission into Victoria’s Mental Health System.</p> <p>Findings from the DH review will be published on the DH website. The Victorian Government’s response to the review will also take into consideration findings from VAGO’s 2021 report on <i>Reducing the Harm Caused by Gambling</i>.</p>

PAEC RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSE
<p>38. Gambling treatment and support services transition from the Department of Justice and Community Safety to the Department of Health, given the high instances of co-occurring conditions for people experiencing gambling harm.</p>	<p>Support in full The Victorian Government supports this recommendation. In late January 2024, the government announced that gambling treatment and support services would transfer to DH. This transfer will enable gambling to be considered in a more holistic and integrated way in the planning, delivery and evaluation of mental health and wellbeing, and alcohol and other drug, programs and services. A new Gambling Harm Interdepartmental Committee (IDC) will be established to ensure coordinate of the new gambling harm response model with membership from the VGCCC, DH, DJCS and DFFH.</p>
<p>39. Gambling treatment and support services are integrated with mental health, alcohol and other drug, family violence and homelessness services.</p>	<p>Support in full See response to Recommendation 38.</p>

PAEC RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSE
<p>40. Government-funded gambling treatment and support services explore the possibility of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • transforming Gambler’s Helpline and Gambling Help Online from referral to counselling and outreach services • better promotion of these services • supporting Gambler’s Help service providers with training to provide culturally responsive services to culturally and linguistically diverse communities and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. 	<p>Support in full</p> <p>The Victorian Government recognises the importance in cultivating public awareness of Gambler’s Help services and ensuring these services are accessible to people from a range of different backgrounds and life experiences. This includes First Nation’s people and people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.</p> <p>Upon implementation of the new gambling harm prevention and response model, the Victorian Government will undertake a service system review (DH review) of the gambling prevention and treatment system over the 2024-25 and 2025-26 financial years, to embed a new operating model. While the DH review will build on the findings of VRGF’s review, its expanded scope will reflect a wider operating context of the mental health and wellbeing, and alcohol and other drug, service systems, including reforms recommended by the 2021 Royal Commission into Victoria’s Mental Health System.</p> <p>An interdepartmental committee will be created to ensure ongoing interconnection between promotional activities, including campaigns, with oversight from the VGCCC, DH, DJCS and DFFH.</p>
<p>41. The Victorian Government consider regulatory measures to improve the collection, accessibility and publication of data held by the gambling industry, online gambling providers and gambling venues, including municipal-level data and data related to socioeconomic and demographic characteristics of customers.</p>	<p>Support in full</p> <p>The Victorian Government supports this recommendation. DJCS will work with the VGCCC to consider how data can be better captured and shared, including the appropriate regulatory measures to facilitate this.</p>

PAEC RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSE
<p>42. The Victorian Government advocate for the Commonwealth Government to compel online gambling providers to provide comprehensive anonymised data on customer use of their products. This includes data on demographics, indicators of gambling harm and the outcomes of intervention measures to increase understanding of the drivers and impact of online gambling harm.</p>	<p>Support in full The Victorian Government supports this recommendation, noting that similar matters were considered by the <i>Federal Inquiry into Online Gambling</i>.</p>
<p>43. The Victorian Government consider the benefits of introducing the provision of real-time, anonymised data of the use of online gambling products as a licensing condition for online gambling providers licensed in Victoria and where appropriate advocate for similar action by the Commonwealth Government.</p>	<p>Support in principle See response to Recommendation 42.</p>
<p>44. The Victorian Government consider how Gambling Codes of Conduct and harm minimisation ministerial directions can be intentionally designed and enforced to ensure young people are protected from the harms of online gambling and people under the age of 18 are unable to access gambling products online.</p>	<p>Support in full The Victorian Government supports this recommendation and will consider the elements raised as part of the ongoing review of the Responsible Gambling Codes of Conduct.</p>

PAEC RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSE
<p>45. The Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation or its successor work with the Department of Education to review and update or develop evidence-based resources for Victorian students and their families addressing the harm caused by simulated gambling and gambling-like activities, to be introduced to support curriculum delivery at both a primary and secondary school level.</p>	<p>Support in principle</p> <p>The Victorian Government supports evidence-based education and resources on gambling harm and the risks associated with gambling, for school communities.</p> <p>The VRGF’s ‘Be Ahead of the Game’ School Education Program includes elements that address simulated gambling and gambling-like features within games. These resources and sessions are available for students in the later years of primary school and in secondary school. They have been developed in consultation with the Department of Education, Independent Schools Victoria, Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools and various teacher associations.</p>
<p>46. The Victorian Gambling and Casino Control Commission outline clear and accessible information on its webpage explaining its role in regulating online gambling in Victoria across licensing and approvals, monitoring and analysis, education and enforcement.</p>	<p>Support in full</p> <p>The Victorian Government notes that the VGCCC is redeveloping its website, which will set out information on its role, obligations, including various application processes for each segment of the gambling industry, including online gambling (wagering).</p>
<p>47. The Victorian Government establish its strategy for the regulation of online gambling. This strategy should outline harm minimisation objectives for the Victorian Gambling and Casino Control Commission across licensing and approvals, monitoring and analysis, education and enforcement of online gambling products accessible by Victorians, with an outcomes framework to be reported against annually.</p>	<p>Support in principle</p> <p>The Victorian Government supports this recommendation in principle, noting that online gambling is an area predominantly overseen by the Commonwealth Government.</p>

PAEC RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSE
<p>48. Wagering and betting licences awarded by the Minister for Casino, Gaming and Liquor Regulation from August 2024 include gambling harm minimisation conditions in line with international best practice.</p>	<p>Support in principle</p> <p>Under the current and new licences, the state is committed to supporting innovation and growth in the Victorian wagering and betting market, while meeting our gambling harm minimisation objectives and responsible gambling principles.</p> <p>The VGCCC maintains strong regulatory oversight of the wagering and betting operations and will work with the new licensee to ensure continuation of key reforms and improvements to minimise gambling harm.</p> <p>The VGCCC will closely monitor Tabcorp’s performance, and act as required, to ensure the government’s harm minimisation objectives are met. The government acknowledges Tabcorp’s commitment to gambling harm minimisation and expects Tabcorp to continue to work with the VGCCC to enhance its systems to allow for more harm minimisation measures to be implemented.</p>
<p>49. To increase transparency for the Victorian community, the Victorian Gambling and Casino Control Commission consider publishing all gambling service provider Responsible Gambling Codes of Conduct on their webpage.</p>	<p>Support in full</p> <p>The Victorian Government supports this recommendation, noting that all Responsible Gambling Codes of Conduct adopted by gambling providers have consistently been published on the VGCCC website. Further information is available at: https://www.vgccc.vic.gov.au/gambling/bookmaker-and-employee/understand-your-permit/responsible-gambling-code-conduct.</p>
<p>50. The Victorian Gambling and Casino Control Commission report on the nature and number of breaches of gambling service provider codes of conduct in its Annual Report.</p>	<p>Support in full</p> <p>The Victorian Government supports this recommendation noting the 2022-23 VGCCC Annual Report already includes instances of RG Code breaches by venues and the casino (including the nature of these breaches).</p>

PAEC RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSE
<p>51. The Victorian Government implement an evaluation process for measuring the effectiveness of gambling codes of conduct and gambling provider requirements are routinely updated in line with international best practice to prevent gambling harm.</p>	<p>Support in principle The Victorian Government supports the intent of this recommendation, noting the <i>Gambling Regulation Act 2003</i> requires gambling codes of conduct to be reviewed every 5 years.</p>
<p>52. The Victorian Government implement a purpose-designed code of conduct for online gambling providers which identifies indicators of gambling harm, policies and procedures for detection and the required actions of providers to address these harms. The code should also include all National Consumer Protection Framework measures so that information regarding the obligations of online gambling providers to reduce gambling harm is accessible in a single location.</p>	<p>Support in principle The Victorian Government supports this recommendation in principle, noting DJCS is reviewing the Responsible Gambling Code of Conduct for wagering, as well as engaging in a national process regarding wagering harm minimisation. This recommendation will be further considered as part of these processes.</p>

PAEC RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSE
<p>53. The Victorian Gambling and Casino Control Commission consider publishing its monitoring regime for providers of online gambling products accessed by Victorians.</p>	<p>Support in full</p> <p>The VGCCC has recently reprioritised staffing arrangements to reflect the enhanced focus on the monitoring of online gambling providers.</p> <p>The VGCCC is scheduled to develop a forward monitoring program in line with Phase 3 work associated with its Regulatory Approach. Outward reporting on the approach to regulation and monitoring activities by industry segment will occur as part of Phase 3. This will include online providers who are not licensed in Victoria, but who provide services to Victorians and are subjected to Victorian requirements.</p>
<p>54. The Victorian Gambling and Casino Control Commission publish all disciplinary actions taken and outcomes regarding online gambling providers, on its webpage in a timely manner.</p>	<p>Support in full</p> <p>The Victorian Government supports this recommendation, noting all disciplinary action and prosecution outcomes are published on the VGCCC website.</p> <p>The ‘disciplinary actions’ identified by the Committee were not published in the disciplinary action page of the VGCCC website because they were not classified as disciplinary action proceedings. One related to a prosecution (which was published on a different VGCCC webpage) and the other related to a warning letter.</p>
<p>55. The Victorian Government review the penalty framework for enforcement action available to the Victorian Gambling and Casino Control Commission against online gambling providers to ensure penalties for breaches of online gambling harm minimisation requirements match the seriousness of the breaches and provide an adequate incentive to change behaviour.</p>	<p>Support in principle</p> <p>The Victorian Government supports this recommendation in principle, and considers the appropriateness of penalties as a matter of course.</p>

Victorian Government response to the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee Inquiry into *Gambling and liquor regulation in Victoria: a follow up of three Auditor-General reports*

PAEC RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSE
<p>56. The Victorian Government provide in-principle support for the establishment of a national ombudsman for complaints against online gambling providers.</p>	<p>Support in principle</p> <p>The Victorian Government notes this recommendation relates to a recommendation of the Federal Inquiry Report: <i>You win some, you lose more: Online gambling and its impacts on those experiencing gambling harm</i>. The Victorian Government will participate in upcoming discussions with the Commonwealth, and other state and territory governments, regarding the protections and complaints against online gaming providers.</p>
<p>57. All Victorian licensing, monitoring and enforcement of bookmaking be transferred to the Victorian Gambling and Casino Control Commission.</p>	<p>Support in full</p> <p>The Victorian Government supports the transfer and consolidation of all licensing, monitoring and enforcement of bookmaking from racing authorities, to the VGCCC.</p>

PAEC RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSE
<p>58. The Victorian Gambling and Casino Control Commission publish on its webpage accurate data on the number of licensed bookmakers in Victoria, including how the different types of bookmakers—such as corporate or individual—are characterised.</p>	<p>Support in full</p> <p>The Victorian Government supports this recommendation, noting the VGCCC will conduct an audit of existing bookmaker lists to ensure all registrations are active (i.e., has not been surrendered, cancelled, or expired).</p> <p>The <i>Gambling Regulation Act 2003</i> allows persons to be registered both as an individual or as a corporate bookmaker. A registered bookmaker may further apply for approval to be a member of a bookmaking partnership or any other partnership where the business is conducted jointly with other bookmakers. Accordingly, all bookmakers that are part of the partnership list will also be listed in the individual/sole trade list.</p> <p>A bookmaker’s registration remains in force for a maximum of 10 years unless surrendered or cancelled. Therefore, bookmakers registered in another jurisdiction can still have an active Victorian approval if they have not surrendered their registration. Equally, bookmakers registered in another jurisdiction can also apply for registration in Victoria.</p> <p>Further information will also be provided to clarify the differences between individual registered bookmakers, registered bookmakers who have formed a partnership, and corporate bookmakers (being corporate entities only).</p>

PAEC RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSE
<p>59. The Victorian Gambling and Casino Control Commission (VGCCC) review the bookmaker licenses awarded by Racing Victoria, Harness Racing Victoria and Greyhound Racing Victoria and include in the review harm minimisation criteria that draw on the VGCCC’s Harm Minimisation Assessment Tool (HMAT) and international best practice measures.</p>	<p>Support in full</p> <p>The Victorian Government supports this recommendation and will continue to review the effectiveness of the current regulatory framework regarding racing authorities.</p> <p>All bookmakers issued with a bookmaker’s licence by Racing Victoria (RV) (and other racing controlling bodies) under the <i>Racing Act 1958</i>, must be a registered bookmaker under the <i>Gambling Regulation Act 2003</i>. As all registered bookmakers must implement a Responsible Gambling Code of Conduct and comply with harm minimisation directions if it provides interactive wagering and betting services, bookmakers licensed by RV are therefore required to comply with harm minimisation obligations.</p>
<p>60. The Victorian Government advocate through the Ministers on Online Wagering and Harm Minimisation forum for a review of the adequacy of safer gambling training requirements.</p>	<p>Support in full</p> <p>The Victorian Government supports harm minimisation and will continue to advocate for improved training requirements.</p>

PAEC RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSE
<p>61. The Victorian Government consider the benefits of implementing ministerial directions that compel online gambling providers to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) effectively monitor gambling harm b) intervene and refer customers to qualified specialist gambling harm counselling professionals for access to support services c) collect and provide data on the effectiveness of their interventions against gambling harm outcome indicators as well as provide details on their models of intervention and how they meet best practice d) annually report on the outcomes of their interventions to the Victorian Gambling and Casino Control Commission and how they will improve them. 	<p>Support in principle</p> <p>The Victorian Government (in consultation with the Commonwealth), will consider the benefits of implementing ministerial directions that compel online gambling providers to meet the four elements described in the recommendation. The Government also notes this recommendation is already being contemplated in part, in the code of conduct review (independent to the Commonwealth process).</p>