

Media release

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RAV STRONGLY SUPPORTS GAMBLING REFORM

One of Victoria's leading relationship support services has condemned the Australian Hotels Association's campaign against proposed Australian Government gambling reforms.

Relationships Australia Victoria (RAV), which operates Gambler's Help counselling and provider education services in the Grampians region, says the AHA's "licence to punt" campaign against mandatory pre-commitment is grossly misleading and self-serving.

RAV Centre Manager, Sue Yorston, also described the AHA claim that the move to curb problem gambling was "unAustralian" as emotive and out of kilter with the reality faced by thousands of Victorian families.

"Services like ours see the destructive side of gambling, the havoc it wreaks on families and individuals when gambling moves from being a leisure activity to an addiction," she said.

"We support the proposed mandatory pre-commitment scheme as we believe that not only will such a scheme do no harm, it has the potential to do a lot of good," Ms Yorston said.

"We do not oppose gambling – we oppose problem gambling. The majority of people who gamble do it for fun, spend their money and then go home. However, problem gamblers don't know when to stop and could easily lose \$1,500 an hour on the pokies without even realising it."

Ms Yorston cited the case of an 18-year-old Ballarat man who was taken to a gaming venue for his birthday. She said he became hooked after winning \$400 on a return visit, and within a few short months had spent \$15,000 on gaming machines and was \$10,000 in debt.

"The advertising campaign against the scheme demonstrates that the AHA puts profits ahead of the health and well-being of the community.

"It clearly does not want to address the fact that problem gambling affects real people in sometimes devastating ways."

Ms Yorston said the aim of pre-commitment was for people to make informed decisions about their gambling.

"Spend limits will stop a pastime from migrating to an unmanageable problem. The crucial issue that distinguishes a leisure pastime from problem gambling is chasing your losses. We would expect a spend limit will stop that from happening."

Ms Yorston urges Victorians to support initiatives that seek to curb problem gambling, such as the pre-commitment scheme.

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