

# Report on a page

Gambling is a form of entertainment, but it can be harmful. Its negative effects can be widespread – impacting individuals, families, and communities. Gambling has grown significantly in Queensland in recent years, with losses in 2022–23 totalling \$6.1 billion, up 36 per cent since 2018–19.

The Office of Liquor and Gaming Regulation in the Department of Justice and Attorney-General (the department) leads the government’s response to gambling harm, through various measures, including the *Gambling harm minimisation plan for Queensland 2021–25* (harm minimisation plan). We assessed how effective Queensland’s strategies are in minimising and preventing gambling-related harm.

## Protecting consumers and communities from harm

Consumers and communities need greater access to preventative measures and resources to mitigate gambling’s adverse effects. The harm minimisation plan emphasises the importance of preventative strategies, but work undertaken to date has lacked sufficient proactive, preventative initiatives that adequately target potential harm and are tailored to the needs of at-risk groups.

While the government receives taxes and levies from gambling activities, a disproportionately small amount (0.62 per cent) is funded back to the department to deliver harm minimisation services. (See Figure A.) This has constrained the department’s ability to deliver some services. Although the government has provided additional one-off funding between 2022–23 and 2024–25, the department may face similar problems in delivering services into the future without greater resources.

**Figure A**  
**Queensland gambling snapshot – 2022–23**



Notes: \*Gambling turnover is the amount of money bet, regardless of whether that money is won or lost. ^Funding for minimising gambling harm comprises \$9.8 million in annual funding and \$2.1 million in additional funding.

Source: Compiled by the Queensland Audit Office using information from the Department of Justice and Attorney-General and Queensland Treasury.

Historically, most of the department’s funding and resources go toward gambling help services. But these services are not adequately tailored to the needs of at-risk groups. For example, some of the existing programs and services lack culturally sensitive support for First Nations people and diverse communities. Gambling help services are also being underutilised in some regional and remote areas. The department commissioned reviews of its gambling help services and self-exclusion program, but it has been slow to act on the recommendations for improvement they provided.

The department needs up-to-date information on gambling harm and its impact to inform prevention efforts. It has not conducted targeted state-based research for over 9 years, which increases the risk that the harm minimisation plan and its initiatives are not designed or tailored to meet Queenslanders’ needs.

## Regulating the gambling industry

The *Queensland responsible gambling Code of Practice* (the code of practice) is one of the key mechanisms that sets out the requirements and expectations of the industry. However, the voluntary nature of the code of practice inhibits the department’s ability to effectively regulate responsible gambling and hold industry to account. The department’s regulatory program does not take a comprehensive risk-based approach, which means it may not focus on higher-risk areas. It also lacks key regulatory elements such as an effective system to monitor and report on compliance and educate the industry.

## Implementing and monitoring harm minimisation strategies

To strengthen the delivery of its strategies, the department needs to improve its governance arrangements. It should better define roles and responsibilities, project management, and decision-making processes, especially where industry and community groups are involved.

The department is unable to determine whether it has been effective in minimising gambling harm, as it has not established robust and comprehensive measures to evaluate the impact of work undertaken to date.

We made 10 recommendations to improve how the department protects consumers and communities from gambling harm and to strengthen research, regulation, and implementation of its strategies.