

# USING YOUR VOICE FOR CHANGE

"It takes time, it takes intention and it takes compassion."

- Kate

Scan the QR Code to learn online!



**ACT GAMBLING**  
SUPPORT SERVICE

**mieact**  
A safe space for mental health education

*Relationships Australia*  
CANBERRA & REGION

# VOICES OF GAMBLING HARM

## This program aims to assist in the:

1. Reduction of gambling harm associated stigma within the community and a reduction of self-stigma within individuals impacted by gambling harm.
2. Increase in self-identification of gambling harm concerns including psychological harm.
3. Increase in help seeking behaviour for individuals impacted by gambling harm.
4. Improved understanding about gambling harm amongst government, gambling industry, communities, families and individuals.
5. Provision of a wide range of accessible, responsive and effective services and initiatives that prevent and reduce gambling harm.

## JOHN'S STORY

I went to university and became an accountant. I never thought I would be the certain person to have an issue with gambling. I had a big win and thought wow, if I've done it once I could do it again. Unfortunately, it led to me developing a gambling issue. What I'd do is chase my losses and go further into the red. I was living off my credit card or taking cash advances on my credit card. It was a vicious cycle. It was an awful feeling through my mind and body and I would think, 'I've done it again, I've lost again.' I would pull out of different social events and holidays - gambling really restricted my life. Finally, I reached out for professional help and they taught me strategies like self-exclusion, financial management and building positive relationships. In the end, I broke the whole cycle through getting gambling support and spending time with positive role models.

# What is Gambling Harm?

**Gambling harm** is any negative consequence, caused by or made worse by gambling.

Gambling harm affects the whole community, including people who gamble, as well as their partners, parents, children, siblings, extended family, close friends and work colleagues. Gambling harm can have broad ranging impacts on health and wellbeing, work, study, relationships, and finances.

Gambling harm is about more than losing money. In fact, most harms associated with gambling are not financial.

"I lost my friends, my family, my self-esteem, my pride. I lost all of that. That is something that you cannot replace with money." - Markus

# WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT GAMBLING HARM?

Check your knowledge about gambling harm by answering the following questions:

**Gambling Harm happens to:**

- a) Young people
- b) Old people
- c) People from certain cultural and religious backgrounds
- d) All types of people

The correct answer is (D) all types of people. It doesn't discriminate and can impact people from any sort of background. It can impact the person gambling, family members, mates/friends, partners or work colleagues.

**What percentage of ACT adults are experiencing harm from their own and/or someone else's gambling?**

- a) 2%, around 8, 600
- b) 5.7%, around 24, 500 people
- c) 13.6%, around 44, 000 people
- d) 30.1%, around 129, 000 people

The correct answer is (C) 13.6%, around 44,000 people

**Where does Australia stand in terms of Gambling (per person) compared to other countries?**

- a) Australians spend more than any other country
- b) Australians spend less than any other country
- c) Australia is mid table in terms of money spent per person
- d) We are third behind the US and China

The correct answer is (A) Australians spend more per person than any other country.



# TRY NOT TO LET STIGMA OR SHAME AFFECT YOU SEEKING HELP

Scan the QR code to hear from Lived Experience Volunteers about the importance of seeking help. Go to the inside of the back cover to see a list of support services!

Scan the QR Code to hear from our volunteers!



## SELF-REFLECTION

Which support services would you go to for help?

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Who else could you talk to?

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# THE SIGNS OF GAMBLING HARM

Gambling may not always cause immediate harm to you or those around you, and sometimes it's hard to recognise signs when it is impacting on your life.

Getting help may be useful if:

## *HAVING LESS MONEY THAN YOU WOULD LIKE*

Spending more time or money gambling than you wanted

*Having regrets after playing*

*Trying to win back your losses*

**Losing focus at work or social events**

*Playing after the fun stops*

*Spending less time with people you care about*

***HIDING HOW MUCH YOU PLAY FROM FRIENDS AND FAMILY***

## SELF-REFLECTION ACTIVITY:

1) Circle any relevant signs from the list above that you can relate to.

If you are concerned about gambling harm, visit:

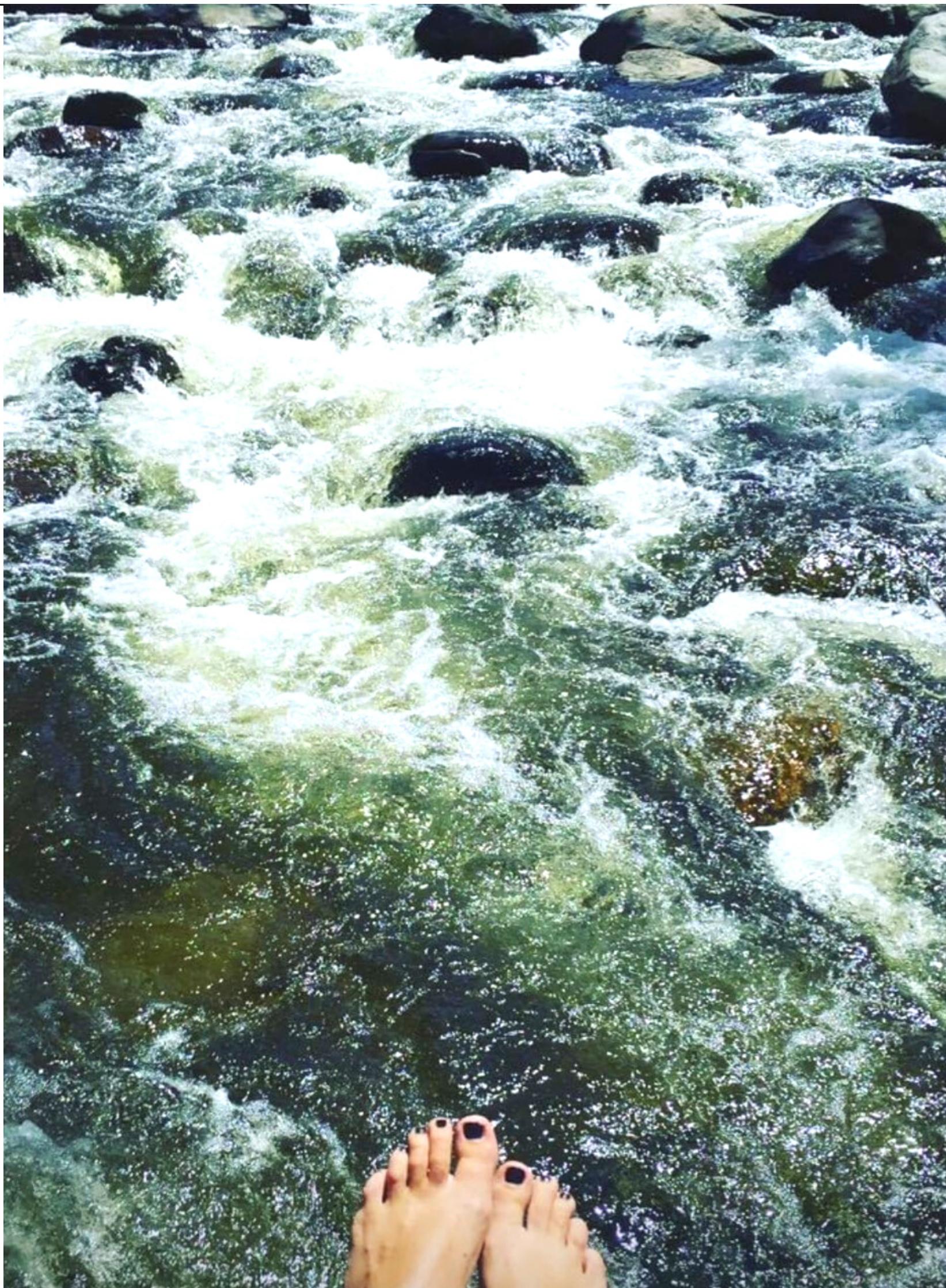
- [www.gamblinghelponline.org.au/](http://www.gamblinghelponline.org.au/)
- [www.actgamblingsupport.org.au/](http://www.actgamblingsupport.org.au/)

# VOICES OF GAMBLING HARM

## KATE'S STORY

I grew up in Sydney and when I was 18, developed a gambling issue. I couldn't buy or do all the things that my friends were able to do at the time because of it. When I moved to Canberra, I thought I had left it behind, but I hadn't. When we had our first child and I was having a stressful period in life, I ended up gambling again. I thought if I could win some money it could pay for this bill or that bill. It really took hold for the next decade and had really devastating impacts both on myself, members of my family and my friends.

It affected my life in a myriad of ways. With my relationships, there was a breakdown in trust. It really occupied my mental space - I was constantly worried about how I was going to manage the money that I had or how I could carve out time to go and gamble. It also had impacts on how I felt about myself. I kept asking "What was wrong with me?", as I'd never seen or known anyone who'd struggled with gambling. I even tried to take my own life. I sought help and in time found an incredible counsellor who helped me to recover who I really was and work out what matters to me. I've really focused on self-awareness, rebuilding my self-esteem, being transparent, as well as setting financial goals. Being OK with my mistakes and not worrying about the past has also assisted me in my journey forwards.



# GAMBLING HARM CAN INVOLVE REAL LIFE DIFFICULTIES

**“It restricted my ability to be able to live life as I wished” - John**

Gambling harm can impact you, a family member, a friend or the community in different ways

1. **Relationship issues:** creating conflict within the relationship or emotional withdrawal from the partner.
2. **Health problems:** increasing stress that could contribute to a range of health concerns such as reducing sleep because of worry.
3. **Emotional or psychological distress:** creating regret or feelings of anger and hopelessness.
4. **Financial problems:** reducing spending on essentials including food, medication and education, and increasing problems related to debt.
5. **Difficulties with work or study:** increasing absenteeism and reducing performance because of tiredness or distraction.
6. **Cultural problems:** reducing the ability to participate in cultural practices or meet community expectations.
7. **Criminal activity:** committing crimes of negligence such as child neglect, crimes such as drug trafficking or prostitution to repay debts or crimes of opportunity such as theft and fraud to fund gambling.

Tips from our  
volunteers!



# TAKING STEPS FORWARD!

- 1 Know the signs of gambling harm
- 2 Focus on the future, taking it one day at a time
- 3 Recognise that you're not alone
- 4 Consider taking a break from gambling by self-excluding from gambling venues
- 5 Give your finances a health check
- 6 Make deliberate actions to create new routines
- 7 Take steps to reduce your risk of gambling harm, e.g. set limits, plan ahead and be self-aware
- 8 Make use of available support services



# Find Alternative Activities

Create a new narrative for yourself

Focusing on the positives about you and working out healthy activities can help you in your journey forwards!

Keep yourself busy and stimulated with activities that promote health and wellbeing. Below are some tips from our volunteers!



## SELF-REFLECTION ACTIVITY:

What are some fun and healthy alternative activities you could do instead?

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# What can families or mates/friends do to help?

If you are worried about a family member or friend's gambling it is recommended you:

Be kind and patient. Try to understand that this might be complex. Change is not a simple thing.

Don't criticise them or dismiss what they are feeling.

Research and learn about gambling.

Encourage professional help seeking options, e.g. ACT Gambling Support Services, Gamblers Anonymous and Care Financial Counselling

Help them to avoid access to gambling opportunities

Be kind and patient. Try to understand that this might be complex. Change is not a simple thing.

Start a safe conversation, let them talk and listen without judgement.

Talk things through, sharing ideas and expressing feelings and thoughts freely in a space without judgement or pressure,

Show compassion and empathy

If you are not in the right space yourself to offer them support, be honest about it, but make sure they have someone else that they can talk to.

If you need support yourself reach out to:

<https://www.gamblinghelponline.org.au/helping-others>

OR 1800 RESPECT



# TAKE AWAY MESSAGES



Scan the QR Code  
to hear from our  
volunteers!

Gambling harm doesn't discriminate

Gambling harm is a public health concern

Raising awareness and educating others can  
reduce gambling harm

The more we talk about it the less people feel  
alone

Don't let stigma stop you from seeking help

Communication is key

Focus on building good relationships

Work towards having a healthy lifestyle

Help others impacted by gambling harm if you can

**"It is about reaching out. It is about trusting."**

**- Markus**

# Concerned about Gambling Harm?

## Are you concerned that you might have a gambling harm issue?

If you find yourself answering yes to any of the questions below, you may be experiencing gambling harm.

1. Spending more time or money gambling than you wanted?
2. Having less money than you should?
3. Having regrets or feeling guilty after gambling?
4. Losing focus at work or social events?
5. Trying to win back your losses?
6. Spending less time with people you care about?
7. Hiding how much you gamble from friends and family?
8. Gambling after the fun stops?

If you're gambling but not having a good time, you could be ignoring the first signs of gambling harm. Recognition is the first step towards addressing gambling harm.

**For further information or to access help services  
call 1800 858 858 (24/7)**

# VOICES OF GAMBLING HARM

## MARKUS' STORY

When I was a young man and started going out, I saw one of my family members gambling. At around 20, I won a jackpot and my gambling went from low/medium risk to a high risk of gambling. The harm to my life from gambling was more than just losing money. It destroyed my marriage and relationships. I lost my friends, family, self-esteem and pride. It wasn't until age 50 that I sought help. It was an acknowledgment of the impact of the harm on my life and family and friends. I've been on that journey now for ten years. What I do now if I have issues, is I'll reach out and communicate. I have a plan in place and if I think about gambling or it starts to impact me, I use the strategies in that plan and go and speak to support people who can assist me.

"I've been on that journey now for ten years. The journey is a journey that I've molded myself so there is not a one size fits all."

# Resources

## Emergency/Crisis

If in an Emergency call: **000**  
for police, ambulance or fire

If in Crisis call:  
Lifeline @ 13 11 14

Suicide Call Back Service @  
1300 659 467

Kids Helpline @ 1800 55 1800

1800 RESPECT

Domestic Violence Crisis  
Support Service  
@ 02 6280 0900

## ACT Specific

ACT Gambling Support Service  
(run by Relationships Australia  
Canberra & Region)  
@ 1800 858 858 or 02 6122 7100 or  
email: [enquiries@racr.org.au](mailto:enquiries@racr.org.au)

Care Financial Counselling  
@ 1800 007 007 or 02 6257 1788  
(ACT) or email: [admin@carefcs.org](mailto:admin@carefcs.org)  
[www.carefcs.org/](http://www.carefcs.org/)

Multicultural Hub  
@ 02 6100 4611 or [www.mhub.org.au/](http://www.mhub.org.au/)

Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal  
Health Service  
@ 02 6284 6222 or  
[www.winnunga.org.au/](http://www.winnunga.org.au/)

## Nationwide Supports

Gambling Help Online  
@ 1800 858 858 or  
[www.gamblinghelponline.org.au/](http://www.gamblinghelponline.org.au/)

Gamblers Anonymous Australia  
@ [www.gaaustralia.org.au/](http://www.gaaustralia.org.au/)



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This project was funded through the ACT Gambling Harm Prevention and Mitigation Fund

# YOUR JOURNEY CONTINUES...

"I'm on my journey and it's a  
continuing journey. It is about  
taking that first step."

- Markus



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