

Press Release

NSW Department of Customer Service

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Setting limits makes a difference, but gamblers need more prompts to opt-in

CQUniversity researchers have found bet limits can help keep Australia's online gamblers out of hot water, but the majority of consumers aren't using the money-saving mechanism.

In a new study funded by [Gambling Research Australia](#) (GRA), experts at CQUniversity's Experimental Gambling Research Laboratory (EGRL) found consumers are not always prompted to use the betting limit option. The new research further suggests making the scheme mandatory and capping maximum limits would strengthen harm prevention.

Researchers surveyed more than 3,000 regular race and sports bettors and found 41 per cent had set a deposit limit, but more than half considered themselves 'unlikely' to set one. Those participants who set limits found them very useful, with a quarter finding the intervention prevented overspending at least once a week.

Since mid-2019, Australian online betting agencies have been required to let consumers set deposit limits for their online gambling, and to regularly prompt users about setting up or reviewing their limits.

Lead author and CQUniversity Research Professor Nerilee Hing, said consumers had a choice of limits with some operators. Research found deposit restrictions were the most popular, followed by an overall spend limit, a single bet amount limit, and a loss limit. A limit on the time spent gambling was the least popular among participants, with just 22 per cent switching on the clock.

"We also looked at what type of person was more likely to set limits. Of those with more serious gambling problems, 45.6 per cent were setting at least one limit," Professor Hing said.

"This is encouraging, however as this group benefits the most from opt-in limits, the fact that more than half aren't taking that option suggests there's still a need to address why people are unwilling to limit their betting."

Professor Hing and her team then presented participants with a series of tailored messages about bet limits and tested these in a randomised trial with more than 1,200 regular consumers.

Across the four-week trial, limit setting increased among participants, with 32 per cent adopting at least one type of limit. Those with a severe gambling problem were significantly more likely to set a limit.

“The study showed that prompt messages need to be consistent to allow gamblers to self-reflect. Then we see better uptake of limits,” Professor Hing said.

This research supports evaluation of the voluntary opt-out pre-commitment measure and refinements to strengthen the [National Framework](#). A joint Commonwealth, state and territory government endeavour, the National Framework provides protections for consumers of interactive wagering services licensed in Australia, in line with international best practice.

Gambling Research Australia (GRA) is a joint Commonwealth, state and territory program, established to develop an effective evidence base to support gambling policy and regulatory decisions. The Commonwealth has contributed half the annual funding of the GRA program. The combined funding contribution from states and territories has matched the annual funding from the Commonwealth, based on the proportion of national gambling expenditure.

Study co-authors were CQUniversity researchers Prof Matthew Browne, Dr Alex M T Russell, Prof Matthew Rockloff and Catherine Tulloch.

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