

# Media Release

**The Hon Melissa Horne MP**

Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation

Minister for Ports and Freight

Minister for Fishing and Boating



Monday, 29 March 2021

## INVESTIGATING IMPACTS OF COVID-19 ON GAMBLING HARM

The Andrews Labor Government is investing in new research to examine the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on the gambling environment and the implications for associated behaviours and harm.

The Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation will provide \$600,000 through round 11 of its annual *Grants for Gambling Research Program* to support research into the theme of the funding round – ‘Gambling in Victoria in 2020 – COVID-19 and beyond’.

Investigative grants of up to \$150,000 over three years have been awarded to the following research projects:

- *Catalyst or circuit breaker? A prospective cohort study to assess COVID-19’s effect on relationships between gambling availability, gambling behaviour, harm and social, psychological and financial wellbeing* – Professor Nerilee Hing, CQ University
- *Economic insecurity and gambling behaviours in Victoria in the COVID-19 society* – Professor Lisa Farrell, RMIT
- *How Victorian venue gamblers kept busy during COVID-19 venue closures: can substituted leisure activities reduce gambling urges and the risk of gambling harm?* – Sarah Hare, Schottler Consulting.

Mid-career Researcher grants of up to \$100,000 over two years have been awarded to:

- *Online gambling in a world changed by COVID-19: trajectories for people in the Sunraysia Aboriginal community* – Associate Professor Sarah MacLean, La Trobe University
- *Preventing a new epidemic during a pandemic: The Influence of COVID-19 related stressors on gambling behaviour in the moment and in the real world* – Associate Professor Nicki Dowling, Deakin University.

An Early Career Researcher grant of up to \$50,000 over 18 months has been awarded to *Focus on families: The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the harms and support needs of families and friends of gamblers* by Dr Stephanie Merkouris, Deakin University.

The findings of the six research projects will help the Foundation shape future initiatives and activities to prevent and reduce gambling harm in the Victorian community. More information about the research program can be found on the Foundation’s website at [responsiblegambling.vic.gov.au/research](https://responsiblegambling.vic.gov.au/research).

### Quotes attributable to Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation Melissa Horne

*“We know that throughout the pandemic and the associated lockdown, some Victorians benefitted from an enforced break from in-venue gambling, while others found it incredibly challenging.”*

*“To be able to plan and respond to gambling harm effectively, we need to know how COVID-19 affected gambling behaviours. This funding will be incredibly beneficial in understanding how those vulnerable to gambling were impacted by the pandemic.”*

### Quote attributable to Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation CEO Shane Lucas

*“The most recent publicly available data shows online race and sports betting increased by 30 per cent compared to the same period the year before. It’s critical we understand and learn from these changes in gambling behaviour.”*

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