

Church Toolkit: GambleAware Week





A Call to Prayer for Gambling Reform

Every day, families, friendships and communities are impacted by gambling harm.

Across New South Wales and around Australia, billions of dollars are lost on gambling each year. Behind every statistic are people carrying stress, financial hardship, relationship breakdown and deep emotional pain. Gambling harm affects not only the person who gambles, but also their children, partners, friends and communities. Millions of people are impacted by harm that is largely preventable.

The power of the gambling industry reaches into our economy, politics, culture and social relationships – and affects people deeply and spiritually. At Wesley Mission, we've taken up the banner of strong, evidence-based advocacy for sensible and proportionate gambling reform. This struggle for justice is an essential expression of our mission to continue the work of Jesus Christ in Word and deed.

Now, we're also calling God's church across our nation to pray with us. We believe the prayers of the church will be essential to seeing injustice overcome and the gambling industry reformed – for good.

Josephine Butler was a remarkable 19th century evangelical leader and social reformer who fought for the rights of women and girls in Great Britain. The prayers of the church provided the bedrock for the eventual success of her efforts. She said"

It is not enough to know the history of great political movements; we must participate in the making of history through prayer.
(Josephine Butler)

Throughout history, prayer has accompanied great movements for justice and social change. We believe prayer remains essential today. In the end, the struggle for real gambling reform in Australia is spiritual before it is political – a battle with principalities and powers.

On **Sunday 25 October** as part of GambleAware Week, we invite churches across New South Wales to pray with us. **Please take a moment in your worship celebrations to pray for gambling reform.** Let us pray for people affected by gambling harm, for the families and communities carrying the cost, for leaders with the courage to act and for reforms that put people before profits.

Together, may we seek God's justice, healing and hope.

"Will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly." (Luke 18:7-8)

We are so grateful for your solidarity with us in this struggle.



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Background

Australia loses more to gambling per person than any other country in the world. Poker machines, as well as online betting apps, are designed to keep people gambling for longer and spending more money. Yet the real cost cannot be measured in dollars alone.

Gambling harm can contribute to:

- Financial stress and hardship
- Relationship breakdown
- Mental health challenges
- Family conflict
- Social isolation
- Community disadvantage

Many people affected by gambling harm feel shame and isolation. Yet no one should face these challenges alone.

Why pray for gambling reform?

Prayer has accompanied many great movements for justice throughout history – most notably the abolition of slavery through the efforts of William Wilberforce and the Clapham Sect. prayer changes hearts, strengthens courage and reminds us that God is at work even when change seems difficult. What may seem impossible to us is always possible for the God we draw near to in prayer.

In New South Wales alone, more than **\$1.1 million is lost on poker machines every hour, 24 hours a day, seven days a week**. Research shows that two in five people have experienced harm from their own gambling or the gambling of someone close to them. Nationally, this represents millions of Australians affected by gambling harm. This is not simply an issue that impacts the person gambling, but the family, friends and extended community. Escalating gambling losses are causing a public health catastrophe across our nation, concentrated in the most vulnerable and socially disadvantaged communities. Its effects are felt in increased suicidal ideation and mental ill-health, domestic and family violence, crime, housing stress, homelessness, and a myriad of other destructive forms.

As followers of Jesus, we are called to seek justice, defend human dignity and stand alongside those experiencing harm. Prayer strengthens and guides' action. Prayer changes the course of history. As we pray, by God's gracious hand we seek a future where communities are safer and people flourish.

Need help now?

Support is available for anyone affected by gambling harm, whether it is your own gambling or the gambling of someone close to you.

Assistance for all those impacted by gambling harm is always available by calling the GambleAware Helpline on **1800 858 858**, 24 hours and day, 7 days a week.



Prayer Points

Pray for people experiencing gambling harm

- For the spiritual power gambling holds over our nation and state to be broken, in Jesus' name - for chains to be loosened and shackles to be broken
- For people being preyed upon by harmful gambling products and practices to find freedom, healing and hope
- That shame and isolation would be replaced with connection, support and a renewed sense of dignity.
- For Indigenous, migrant and socially disadvantaged communities who are disproportionately impacted by gambling harm
- That people seeking help would find practical assistance, caring community and pathways to recovery.

Pray for families and communities

- For spouses, children, parents, friends and family members affected by someone else's gambling
- For families and communities carrying the cost of gambling harm to find support, connection and renewed hope
- For Australian children and vulnerable community members to be protected from the normalisation and targeting of the gambling industry.
- For counsellors, community workers, financial support services, church leaders and all who walk alongside people affected by gambling harm, that they would be sustained, encouraged and effective in their work

Pray for leaders

- For political leaders to act with courage, wisdom and integrity
- For God's justice to move the hearts of decision-makers and bring lasting change for families and communities affected by gambling harm.
- For the grassroots voice of the collective church, community groups, the media and individuals to become so great that governments are compelled to act in implementing urgent needed reforms

Pray for reform

- For evidence-based reforms that reduce gambling harm and protect future generations.
- For meaningful reform of the poker machine industry in NSW, including stronger safeguards that prevent harm before it occurs
- For the implementation of a mandatory account-based system for poker machines across NSW, with robust harm prevention measures built in
- For poker machines across NSW to be powered down between midnight and 10am



- For a future where community connection, sport and entertainment are not dependent on gambling losses.
- For God's justice to move hearts, shape public policy and bring lasting change for families and communities affected by gambling harm.

Digital resources: Videos & Song

These short videos can help your church engage more deeply with the call to prayer during GambleAware Week. Use them in Sunday services, prayer gatherings, small groups or on church social media to raise awareness, inspire reflection and encourage action.

Suggested videos include:

- **Video:** A video (8 minutes) of an overview of the gambling reform campaign, why change is needed and three lived-experience perspectives:
 - [A Call to Prayer for Gambling Reform | GambleAware Week 2026](#)



- **Video:** A short video (4 minutes) of an overview of the gambling reform campaign and one lived-experience perspective:
 - [A Call to Prayer for Gambling Reform | GambleAware Week 2026 - YouTube](#)





- **Video:** A short video (1min 40sec) call-to-action inviting churches and individuals to pray, learn and take part:
 - [A Call to Prayer for Gambling Reform | GambleAware Week 2026 - YouTube](#)



Song

Use this song to reflect and pray.

Credit: Commons Worship song "To Act Justly". With thanks to Ben Fielding and Reuben Morgan, from Commons Worship, who generously gifted this song.

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CXDprVRsOkA&feature=youtu.be>





Model Prayers

A prayer for gambling victims and for change

Rev Dr Rick Dacey, Senior Minister – Wesley Mission

Merciful God,

We pray for our neighbours, friends and loved ones

whose lives and families are being harmed and even destroyed by gambling.

We pray for a widow who's lost her husband of 43 years.

She's seeking escape from loneliness and loss – in a place where the staff treat her like a queen – until she has no money left to pour into their machine.

We pray for a man who's worked hard to provide for his family,

only to see it all slip away as he desperately chases his losses.

We pray for a young person who started gambling because he was told "it's part of the game"

But now finds himself lying to his mates, stealing from those who love him, and overwhelmed by feelings of secret shame.

Lord, we know that these people are not the problem. They are your beloved. And you hear their desperate cries.

Give us ears to hear them too. And may we, your church, rise up together to say "Enough!"

May we be your answer to our neighbour's prayers.

Give us courage to face down powerful industries that have politicians cowering,

that cynically prey on people's vulnerability and obscenely profit from their suffering.

Strengthen our resolve to demand real change from political leaders.

Strengthen the same political leaders with both the will and courage to act decisively.

Sustain us in prayer, confident in our conviction that with you, all things are possible,

with you, walls of injustice crumble

and, with you, principalities and powers are defeated.

In Jesus' name we pray, Amen

On the Sunday before Gamble Aware Week

Rev Sandy Grant, Dean of St Andrews Cathedral

Almighty God, Ruler of the nations,

Your Word teaches us that the hearts of kings are in your control,

and that you influence and direct them according to your wisdom.

We humbly ask you to overrule the hearts of those who serve in our federal and state parliaments.

Protect them from corruption and the temptation of self-serving.

Enable them to make realistic promises and help them keep their word.



Today, in particular, we pray for governmental courage to legislate effective reforms for gambling harm reduction, particularly that arise through poker machines and sports betting.

God of all comfort, we pray for all those impacted by gambling harm,
along with associated risks like family breakdown, domestic violence, homelessness, depression,
anxiety and suicide.

Be the comfort of those seeking relief,
and grant wisdom to counsellors trying to assist.

May we and our leaders all work for the advancement of your glory, and to the safety and welfare
of this country, so that peace and happiness, truth and justice may be established among us,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.



Webpage

Pray. Learn. Take action.

Gambling harm affects millions of Australians, reaching far beyond financial loss to impact families, relationships, mental health and communities. As Christians, we are called to seek justice, care for our neighbours and stand alongside those experiencing harm.

Visit the Wesley Mission campaign website to access resources, learn more about the urgent need for gambling reform and discover how your church can be part of a growing movement of prayer and action.

Visit the campaign website: <https://www.wesleymission.org.au/equip-faith-leaders-for-day-of-prayer-on-gambling-harm-2026/>

Petition

Prayer and action go hand in hand. Alongside praying for people and communities affected by gambling harm, we invite you to add your voice to Wesley Mission's petition calling for safer poker machine shutdown hours in NSW. By signing the petition, you can help support practical reforms that reduce gambling harm and create safer communities for everyone.

Sign the petition: <https://www.wesleymission.org.au/get-involved/advocate-with-us/petition-on-poker-machines/>