



GAMBLING HARM

Meeting Segment Guide

Produced by the Policy and Advocacy Team
as part of the *Social Justice Stocktake*



Today we will be taking some time to look at the issue of gambling harm and spending some time in prayer for those who are affected.

The following resources have been created to assist you to run a 5-8 minute segment in your Corps' or mission expression Meeting, Team Meeting, ALT Meeting or any space where you gather with other people.

These resources are ready to print and use in your Meeting. Below you'll find:



TALKING POINTS



A PRAYER TIME GUIDE
(INCLUDING THREE WRITTEN PRAYERS)



EXTENDED SEGMENT OPTIONS



LINKS TO FURTHER RESOURCES

For further support in connecting with issues in your local community, contact us at policy.advocacy@salvationarmy.org.au



INTRODUCTION

Today we will be taking some time to look at the issue of gambling harm and spending some time in prayer for those who are affected. There may be sensitive themes discussed today, so if you feel that it would be helpful for you to talk to someone afterwards, please feel free to come and chat to us.

GAMBLING HARM

- » **In this segment, ‘gambling harm’ refers to the adverse consequences** (both initially and in the longer term) experienced due to gambling. These consequences lead to a decrease in health and wellbeing. The impact of this has an effect on the person who has gambled, as well as those who experience the ripple effects of gambling such as the family unit, community and wider population.
- » **Gambling is becoming increasingly common and accessible.** Gambling may be large and sophisticated – such as lotteries, casinos, slot machines, online gambling or sports betting – or small and loosely organised informal games of chance. Hundreds of billions of dollars are gambled worldwide every year. Access to gambling has increased dramatically in the past several decades.ⁱ
- » **Gambling harm is not limited only to those who gamble at risky levels or compulsively.** It is also experienced by the family and friends of those who gamble and the wider community. In Australia, it is estimated that for every person who is experiencing gambling harm, another seven people are directly impacted.ⁱⁱ
- » **Research shows that harm from gambling may include** relationship difficulties, health problems, emotional or psychological distress, financial problems, issues with work or study, cultural issues and criminal activity.ⁱⁱⁱ

- » **Gambling harm reaches across socioeconomic boundaries and cultural/linguistic groups.**

The latest data available shows that Australians lost a total of \$25 billion on gambling in 2018-19. This is equivalent to \$1,277 per person.^{iv}

- » **Gambling Harm is often associated with other social issues.** For instance, 40% of people experiencing gambling harm have also been diagnosed with a mental health condition and approximately 65% of people experiencing gambling harm will consume excessive alcohol.^v

- » **Exploitation is a concerning issue in gambling.**

The premise that gamblers will lose more money than they receive is what makes the gambling sector profitable. No matter how attractive the experience, it is premised with the framework of loss that can have enormous impacts on vulnerable households. Through our Moneycare financial counselling experience, The Salvation Army holds concerns about the impact of short-term credit and predatory lending practices in this context.

- » **Our concern is for everyone suffering due to gambling harm** (that is, those that have gambling compulsions and the families, friends and communities that bear the consequences of gambling) and so we encourage Salvationists to abstain from gambling in any form. Our belief is that all our resources ultimately belong to God and that we have the responsibility to use our money productively, free from greed, without the agenda of gaining at the expense of others (1 Timothy 6:6-10, 17-19).

i. Bryant, W. and Bricknell, S. (2017). Homicide in Australia 2012-13 to 2013-14: National Homicide Monitoring Program report. AIC. <https://www.aic.gov.au/publications/sr/sr2>
ii. Equity Economics (2021). Nowhere to Go. <https://apo.org.au/sites/default/files/resource-files/2021-07/apo-nid313135.pdf>
iii. ABS (2017). Personal Safety, Australia. <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/crime-and-justice/personal-safety-australia/latest-release>



Talking Points



- » **Vitaly, The Salvation Army opposes the stigmatisation of those suffering from a gambling harm.** Many people experiencing gambling harm find themselves increasingly isolated, struggling with shame and a sense of powerlessness. Shame is a driving story for so many of the people we serve, but it is particularly so when we are talking to people who are trapped in gambling harm.
- » **The best way to disarm shame in our lives is to have a conversation** about the thing we are trying so desperately to hide about ourselves. By making safe spaces in our communities and services, people experiencing gambling harm can start talking through the issues and access the support they need. We believe that with support, counselling and greater financial literacy, people can be freed from gambling compulsions and live free from shame.

WHERE TO FROM HERE?

- » **The Salvation Army continues to advocate that gambling harm** minimisation, prevention, and consumer protections are at the centre of any gambling-related legislation and policy across the country. We want to see greater funding for early intervention and prevention programs to prevent harms associated with gambling, while ensuring stronger consumer protections, such as reducing availability of poker machines in the most stressed communities.
- » **Meanwhile, we give thanks to God for dedicated Salvation Army staff** in our Moneycare financial counselling, Gamblers Help support and Recovery Services who are helping people to be freed from gambling addiction and harm in Australia. They are transforming Australia one life at a time with the love of Jesus.



Prayer Time



You may wish to invite people to spend time in silent, individual prayer while one of the songs below plays. Ask people to pray for people experiencing gambling harm, and their families and friends who are impacted by it.

[No Longer Slaves](#) – Zach Williams

The Salvation Army Songbook No. 87 – Jesus, What a Beautiful Name ([lyrics](#))

The Salvation Army Songbook No. 418 – People Need The Lord ([lyrics](#))

Following this time of individual prayer, you may like to have three people read the prayers below. These prayers are printed on separate pages for ease of distribution to your readers.





Prayer Time



Prayer for the world

Our Father in Heaven, hallowed be your name.

We long to see your will be done and for your kingdom to come on Earth as it is in Heaven.

Our prayer today is big but not impossible for you. We long to see your justice and loving kindness prevail above all things so that injustice and oppression would be squashed. As followers of Jesus, we as a group of people represent an Army that longs to hear your love shared with everyone affected by gambling harm.

Lord hear our prayer.

Amen.



Prayer Time



Prayer for Australia

Lord,

We pray for our nation, and the many people who find themselves struggling with gambling harm: individuals, families and communities. The scale of the financial burden and the distress is difficult to bear.

As a movement help us to start a new story – one that looks to the new and profound possibilities of a world where your love and kindness reigns and where your name is honoured above all. Inspired by your loving Holy Spirit, motivate us to speak out against the unjust motivations of others so that we would see reform and real change.

Lord, hear our prayer.

Amen.



Prayer Time



Prayer for those experiencing gambling harm in our community

Dear Lord,

We especially think today of people for whom gambling harm is an everyday part of life. Our prayer is that they might experience a newfound freedom.

For those families in our community peripherally affected by gambling harm, we ask that you bring hope out of an abundance of your mercy, love and peace. May your hand be upon all those affected at this time.

All this we ask in Jesus' powerful name.

Amen.



For an extended segment



If you would like to present an extended segment (that goes for longer than 10 minutes), here are some ideas that may take people deeper:

- » Read [The Salvation Army's International Positional Statement on Gambling](#) for additional information and more ways to discuss the issue with others.
- » [Gambler's Help](#) has a series of personal stories/clips that can be shared in meetings. The clips are generally between 1 and 3 minutes and offer lived experience (not actors) of gambling harm from people of diverse backgrounds and ages.
- » Prayer Activity: set up four prayer stations around the room. People can draw a card out of the deck and go to the station with that suit. Alternatively, people can move between the four stations below:
 - Clubs – pray for regulators and all the places that people gamble in our community, that they would be well-regulated. Activity: set up a tray of sand/rice. Draw a spiral in the sand/rice with your finger. As you do, think of all the places people gamble, remembering that many do this out of a great desire for community, connection and hope.
 - Diamonds – pray for people with gambling compulsions, experiencing harm, shame and despair. Activity: have paper cut-outs of people. Draw faces on the paper cut outs, sticking them to the wall while you pray for people's freedom.
 - Hearts – pray for families/loved ones of people trapped in gambling harm. Activity: have balls of yarn, wrapping it around items in the vicinity of the station, creating a web. Remember that for every person trapped in gambling harm, seven others are also affected. Pray for God to set people free from harm not of their making.
 - Spades – pray for services and case workers that help with recovery from Gambling Harm. Activity: light a candle, thinking about the light these workers are bringing to dark places and helping people find freedom from shame and despair.
- » If you have a Moneycare Counsellor in your region, you may want to invite them to speak in the meeting, to provide an insight into the work of this ministry in helping people trapped in Gambling Harm in your community.

USEFUL SONGS:

[No Longer Slaves – Zach Williams](#)

[The Salvation Army Songbook No. 87 – Jesus, What a Beautiful Name \(lyrics\)](#)

[The Salvation Army Songbook No. 418 – People Need The Lord \(lyrics\)](#)

[The Salvation Army Songbook No. 199 – Such Love \(lyrics\)](#)

[The Salvation Army Songbook No. 998 – Beauty For Brokenness \(lyrics\)](#)



Further Resources



For more information on this issue, and for further resources:

Read [The Salvation Army International Positional Statement on Gambling](#)

Read [‘Taking a Stand’ article on gambling](#)

To find Moneycare/financial counselling services in your state or territory, visit The Salvation Army’s [‘Find help now’](#) page

The National Gambling Helpline on 1800 858 858

[Relationships Australia](#) provides relationship support services to enhance human and family relationships. Phone: 1300 364 277 | 9am–5pm

If you’d like any further information on this resource please contact the Policy and Advocacy Team at policy.advocacy@salvationarmy.org.au

Every person can make a difference.

Together, we can make an even greater difference.



