



Media Release

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Problem gambling is a public health issue, says SACOSS.

An information paper released today by the South Australian Council of Social Service calls for recognition by the State Government of problem gambling as a public health issue.

The paper, entitled *The use of public health models for gambling help services*, outlines how prevention and early intervention will do more to reduce problem gambling than the current modes of treatment.

“Governments need to commit to a greater focus on examining and recording the social costs of gambling, and not just the perceived benefits”, said Karen Grogan, SACOSS Executive Director.

“In South Australia, the government has focused upon a medical model of individualised treatment for problem gamblers, rather than population-based approaches. This focus upon the medical model, and a funding model that only provides funding for frontline services, has been to the detriment of community education and other prevention and early intervention strategies.”

“Internationally the reverse is true: many governments are now viewing problem gambling and public policy development within the context of the public health model” Grogan said.

“A public health model that focuses more on prevention and early intervention, rather than simply treating people in the most severe cases, has the potential to address problem gambling at the grass roots level.”

The public health model is a framework from which an integrated, whole-of-community (which includes government) response can be delivered on particular issues that affect the health of a community. The key difference between the treatment or medical model (the preferred model of operation for many years) and the public health model is the renewed focus upon prevention and early intervention viewed as part of a continuum. The public health model recognises that there are deficits and benefits to gambling for a society. If governments recognise the health, environmental, social and economic impacts of gambling then they will be able to develop informed strategies that seek to minimise the negative effects of gambling.

Download a copy of the paper *The use of public health models for gambling help services* from www.sacoss.org.au/publications/papers