

A call to prayer for gambling reform

Gambling has Australia in its devastating grip. The power of the gambling industry pervades our economy, politics, culture and social relationships – it 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 for prayer. We believe the prayers of the church will be essential to seeing injustice overcome and the gambling industry reformed – for good. Throughout history, prayer has been essential in achieving many great social reforms.

On Sunday 19 October, the day before GambleAware Week begins in NSW, we are calling all churches to briefly pray during worship for gambling reform.

We hope this resource helps you join together in prayer.

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)

Why pray for gambling reform?

Australia loses more to gambling than any other country in the world. In NSW, we estimate each adult loses an average of \$1400 a year to poker machines, and that number is three times higher in socially disadvantaged postcodes.

1 in 5 people surveyed in NSW report experiencing harm because of their gambling activity or that of someone close to them. That equates to more than 5 million people nationally.

These losses are causing a public health catastrophe, 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.

Need help now?

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.

Suggested Prayer Points

- For the spiritual power gambling holds over our nation and state to be broken, in Jesus' name
- For those trapped in a gambling addiction to be set free
- For federal and state governments to enact full bans on gambling ads on all media platforms
- For the implementation of a mandatory cashless gaming card 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 material reduction in poker machines numbers and venues across NSW
- For the grassroots voice of the collective church, community groups, the media and individuals to become so great that governments are compelled to act
- For Indigenous, migrant and socially disadvantaged communities who are disproportionately impacted by gambling harm, that they will be supported and empowered
- For those who provide gambling counselling and education services – that they would be strengthened and their work even more impactful
- For the protection of Australian children from targeting by the gambling industry



Model Prayers

Either of these two prayers can be used as-is or adapted for use in worship services.

A prayer for gambling victims and for change

Rev Dr Rick Dacey, Senior Minister – Wesley Mission

Merciful God,

We pray for our neighbors, 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 neighbor'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 GambleAware 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.

