**[Calls grow for total ban on gambling ads as Australia’s annual losses surge to $32bn](https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2024/sep/15/australia-gambling-annual-losses-ads-ban-calls)**

 **Exclusive**: On a per capita basis, ACT residents posted the heaviest gambling losses and Western Australia the least, according to new data

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Australia’s gambling losses have surged from $25.6bn annually pre-Covid to $32bn in 2022-23, according to new data from the [Queensland](https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/queensland) government.

The data, released on Tuesday, [revealed Australians are now losing $1,555 per capita, up from $1,395 in 2021-22](https://www.qgso.qld.gov.au/statistics/theme/society/gambling/australian-gambling-statistics).

The Alliance for [Gambling](https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/gambling-australia) Reform has seized on the worsening losses to call for full implementation of the 31 recommendations of the parliamentary inquiry into gambling advertisements.

That inquiry, chaired by the late Labor MP Peta Murphy, [recommended a -
\* total ban on gambling ads](https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2023/jun/28/ads-for-online-gambling-should-be-banned-in-australia-within-three-years-inquiry-recommends),
\* ban on inducements,
\* levy on gambling companies; and
\* new national regulator.

The Albanese government [has instead proposed a partial ad ban](https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/article/2024/aug/16/labor-gambling-ad-restrictions-ban-changes). That would entail ads banned online, -
\* in children’s programming,
\* during live sports broadcasts and an hour either side, and
\* limits in general programming.

The Queensland Government Statistician’s Office found Australians lost $32bn in 2022-23. These losses consisted of $23bn from gaming, mostly from poker machines ($15.8bn); casinos ($3.6bn) and lotteries ($3.1bn); and a further $9bn from wagering, betting on sports and racing.

The increase in losses has mostly been driven by gaming, up 19.6% from $19.3bn in 2021-22 to $23bn in 2022-23. Wagering, by contrast, ticked up 1.2% from $8.9bn in 2021-22 to $9bn in 2022-23.

On a per capita basis, Australian Capital Territory residents posted the heaviest gambling losses, losing $2,763 a year, followed by the Northern Territory ($2,130), New South Wales ($2,000), Queensland ($1,470), Victoria ($1,401) and South Australia ($1,227).

Losses were lower on a per capita basis in Western Australia ($889), where poker machines are banned outside of the casino, and Tasmania ($895).

Martin Thomas, the chief executive of the alliance, said: “Australians [lose more to gambling than any other nation in the world](https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/article/2024/sep/05/grattan-institute-gambling-harm-report-australia-ad-ban) because we have a grossly inadequate regulatory regime in which the gambling industry has been allowed to operate virtually unchecked, causing devastation to individuals, families and communities.”

He criticised the Albanese government for “sitting on” the recommendations of the Murphy report for more than 14 months.

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**Does community sport and free-to-air TV in Australia need gambling ads to survive? – video**

“It is time for action,” he said. “It is time for political leadership to protect Australians and especially to protect our children who are being groomed to gamble by a ruthless, profit-hungry industry.”

Thomas also called on state governments to implement mandatory cashless gambling cards at poker machine venues with preset loss limits.

On Wednesday [Anthony Albanese incensed advocates](https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/article/2024/sep/11/nearly-half-of-young-people-gambled-in-past-year-survey-shows-ntwnfb) by telling parliament the “truth” of their position against advertising is that many “want gambling stopped” which would be “an intrusion into people’s personal liberties”.

He said the government had accepted there “should not be any advertising during children’s programs” and that the connection “between sport and gambling needs to be broken”.

**Lenore Taylor**